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**BULLETIN**  
OF  
**THE DEPARTMENT**  
OF  
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**CALCUTTA UNIVERSITY**

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## DRAMATIC WRITINGS OF P. B. SHELLEY

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JIBON BANERJEE

One needs some courage to write about Shelley in this age of ultra-realism. Even after one hundred and fifty years he is regarded as a 'Romantic extremist' whose poetry has nothing to do with the twentieth century enlightenment. It must be difficult for the younger generation rising around to believe that Shelley looked upon political freedom as the direct agent to affect the happiness of mankind and that to rid life of its misery and its evil was the ruling passion of his rebellious soul. He dedicated to this passion every power of his mind, every pulsation of his heart. Any new-sprung hope of liberty inspired a joy and an exultation more intense and wild than he could have felt for any narcissist pleasure. He had been from youth the victim of a feeling inspired by the reaction of the French Revolution and firmly believing in the justice and excellence of his views, it is not surprising that a nature as sensitive, as impetuous, and as generous as his, should put its whole force into the attempt to alleviate for others the evils of those systems he suffered from. The realisation of the golden dream he saw for the future generation is still far-off, but the brave souls who are fighting for it and against injustice and exploitation will surely find in him a kindered soul and a comrade in spirit. Almost all his poetic and dramatic writings may be produced as evidence of this missionary zeal.

We may perhaps justifiably say that a perfect drama, like the two-headed Janus, looks at life simultaneously from within and without, and no other art form realises quite this balance of inner reflections and external realities. But a Romantic poet is more interested in projecting his pet ideas, and, while his plays attain symbolic dimensions, he does not show the necessary grip on actuality. There is more of self-projection than an impersonal commentary on life. Especially Shelley's Romantic spirit, it may be argued with some justification, was too subtle, too inward, too subjective, too idealistic and too lyrical to find a complete, or even a satisfactory expression through the dramatic medium. Moreover, the type of drama which the English Romantics cultivated was largely imitative of Elizabethan tragedies and German melodramas, and it also coincided with the depressing monopoly of theatre managers and actors of low taste. Thus, adverse forces worked from without as much from within. As a result, what the Romantic dramatists—especially the major English

Romantics—Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley and Keats—achieve is 'Closet' drama; the gap between 'literature' and 'drama' becomes pronounced. While this may be regarded as a weakness of these dramatic works, this weakness is also part of the strength, of the distinctiveness, of the poet's seeking to embody their visions in a new vehicle. And while examining Shelley's achievement in this particular genre, we must keep in perspective this distinctiveness.

This is not the place, nor is it necessary, except incidentally, to refer to all those personal experiences, internal and external, that inspired Shelley to write each of his plays, fragments and translations. We shall not attempt here to defend him against all those charges which have been levelled against him since the early nineteenth century. But two of the usual charges may be relevant to refute. These are, firstly, the charge of vagueness, insubstantiality, abstraction, and as a consequence, lack of the dramatic sense. In defence we would only say that these attributes only reveal a particular poetic sensibility and not a stylistic mannerism. And, as such, they do not by themselves come in the way of possessing a dramatic sense. Secondly, it is said that a kind of sentimental optimism deprived him of a tragic vision of life. Actually he was neither unduly sentimental nor unduly optimistic. The optimistic note found in his letters written during the years of *Prometheus Unbound*, *The Cenci*, *Hellas*, *Ode to the West Wind*, to name a few,—is more due to Shelley's faith that poetry ought to hold up before the mind's eye certain idealisms of "moral excellence", and, further, these works suggest to men what they might achieve if they only dared. (Ref. *Prometheus Unbound*). To a discerning reader, Shelley's despair is writ large between the lines, for he was painfully aware, perhaps more than Wordsworth, Byron or Keats, that there is a hiatus between what is and what ought to be. In other words, his despair is born from his, or for that matter any individual's, inability to reform corrupting social systems, heartless customs, and meaningless superstitions. As a result, ideals are sacrificed and degradation stealthily creeps in.

True, Shelley was a visionary, a dreamer of dreams, a man who was in love with the idea of love. Yet, who does not know that he was in fierce conflict with the stark realities of life? Consequently, out of this conflict, his plays *Prometheus Unbound*, *The Cenci* and *Hellas* were created. Truly, again, the visionary in him often soared to such rarefied spheres that he became, in his own words, "The loftiest star of unascended heaven, Pinnacled dim in the intense inane," beating his luminous wings in vain in the void losing the ground under his feet. But tremblingly looking downward, did he not often cry :

"What have I dared ? When am I lifted ? how  
Shall I descend, and perish not ?

.....  
The winged words on which my soul would pierce  
Into the height of loves' rare universe  
Are Chains of lead around its flight of fire—  
I pant, I sink, I tremble, I expire !

(*Epipsychidion*)

In fact, throughout his short life, Shelley struggled not only to transcend reality but also to adjust it to the exigencies of the moment. Moreover, gradually, Shelley was growing out of, what T.S. Eliot called 'adolescence' and gaining maturity and wisdom and coming to an understanding with life and death (Ref. his last poem *Triumph of Life*). In drama too, he was trying to be ruthlessly objective. (Ref. *Charles the First, Swell Foot*). It is a different matter that he often failed in his efforts. One of the reasons for this partial success in his efforts to be objective is that an evocative idea often or nearly often became a source of his creative activity. This idea sprang either from his study of Plato or of Godwin or of some other hero who apparently looked impersonal, objective or far-fetched. But Shelley soaked this derived idea with his private experience and personal emotion so much so that his poetry moved into a metaphysical world. Then it became a creation of the mind, more real than the sensible world. Thus the characters in most of his plays do not become ordinary living human beings, for, in most cases, they become symbols of some pet ideas of their creator.

This happens in his lyrical drama *Prometheus Unbound* (1818-19). C. M. Bowra has rightly said, "Into no poem did Shelley put so much of himself or of what he thought most important." (*Romantic Imagination*, London, 1950, P, 104). The conflict between Prometheus the friend of man, and the pioneer of civilization, and Jupiter, the upstart tyrant of the Universe was Shelley's personal conflict with the forces of evil. He loved rebellion and the rebel, he hated slavery and the exploiter. He was in love with the supramental idea of love—love that can conquer evil, and reason combined with love should be the only harmonising principle in life. In fact, the main theme of the play may boil down to this: progress of the soul in love. Evil is conquered when love and reason unite. When Jupiter is dethroned his son Demogorgon is the spirit of life that defeats the destructive force. The key-note of Act I is that when goodness is touched by love, wonderful results may be achieved. Asia's dream love for Prometheus sounds the death-knell of evil. These are metaphysical ideas put in mystic garb, all favourite



with Shelley. Thus Aeschylus in his *Prometheus Bound* makes a compromise between Prometheus and Zeno. But Shelley "was averse from a catastrophe so feeble as that of reconciling the Champion with the Oppressor of mankind". (Preface to *P. U.*) Hence he felt the need for adding a fourth act, a hymn of rejoicing at the defeat of evil.

This is because to him the *dramatist personae* were not real personages, belonging to the actual world as they were to the Greek dramatist. Neither do they belong even to a make-believe world. They are to Shelley some visible symbols, representing human souls in the variegated aspects. They are placed in strange settings surcharged with poetry of stunning lyrical beauty, only to make them more convincing. So, individual destiny is not Shelley's concern, he is interested in the representation of some valued ideas that will be universal in appeal and application. Neo-Platonism is reconciled with the scientific speculation of the day and Shelley's intolerance with the tyranny of the Church and other radical ideas are there. Further, though the drama is enacted far above the temporal world of concrete situations, Demogorgon's closing words do not merely direct our eyes to a sentimentally conceived utopia, but they also contain a warning that the Golden Age, though won, may be lost again.

Those who think that there is no drama in *Prometheus Unbound* conveniently forget that the work has been called a lyrical drama by its creator. As such, there should be more of lyricism than dramatic action in the play. Admittedly Shelley fails to exploit the terrific conflict between Jupiter and Prometheus and the fall of Jupiter remains unexploited. Wave after wave of lyrical rhapsodies take away much of the dramatic potentialities. Characters are differentiated, but delineation is weak. Though the central figure looks grand in suffering and fortitude, he often looks like an ease-loving lover dallying in the bower—a projection of the romantic lover in Shelley. Yet, when all is said, we have to bear in mind that this very 'weakness' of lyrical flights becomes a glory of the work as some of the profoundest philosophical utterances have been clothed in rhapsodic poetic language that sounds matchless in beauty and sublimity. This synthesis of profundity and beauty has contributed much not only to the play's long-lasting values but also to the accumulated reservoir of immortal inspiring thoughts. Thus, as he himself says in 'Defence of Poetry', "A poet participates in the eternal, the infinite and the one". (Shelley, S. P & P, N. Y. 1950, p.497).

Shelley's next drama *The Cenci* (1819) belongs to a different category. It has a highly realistic canvas where a brooding tragedy is enacted with all its sordid perversions. The plot is based on an Italian tale in which a

terrific clash of wills is shown between the psychotic Count Francesco and his daughter Beatrice. In order to dominate his family the Count violates the modesty of his daughter. The gentle girl is driven to desperation, conspires with her brother and step mother to kill the Count. For this deed they are condemned to death by the Count's friend, the Pope.

In Shelley's view tragedy occurs as the result of any situation which produces moral depravity. At first Beatrice is shown as a kind of saint, a symbol of all that is best in a refined womanhood. Then comes the change necessitated by a barbarous father and a corrupt social environment. She transforms herself into a scheming woman, murdering her father and defying the law of the country. Ultimately she is brought to trial. Her moral duty by a common logic would have been to stick to her ideals of sainthood. But, then, as Shelley thought, she would not have been a tragic heroine. This conception of tragedy contains both Shakespearean and Aristotelian elements. Shelley, however, lays stress on moral degradation as an inherent weakness in the sensual aspect of man. Shelley saw the story as preeminently a work for the stage. He also felt that he had treated the incest theme with enough delicacy to permit the play's presentation. In trying to be realistic, as he says, he "attended simply to the impartial development of the characters as it is probable the persons represented really were". Yet, the fact is that Shelley's romantic sensibility created a work of beauty and power. Out of many tributes two may be quoted. Swinburne called it "the greatest tragedy that been written in any language for upward of two centuries," St. John Ervine declared that "Shelley had a surer sense of form than Shakespeare". (*London Observer*, Nov. 19, 1922). At any rate, *The Cenci* is definitely the finest poetic drama since Shakespeare. That it was acted is a matter of pride for the stage.

As for characterization, Count Cenci's delineation, though slightly exaggerated, is dramatic enough to excite pity and terror on the stage. But Shelley's skill as a dramatist and his insight into the workings of human soul are best illustrated in the success he achieved in unfolding the spiritual history of Beatrice through the frame-work of some dramatic incidents. The central figure becomes a subject of supreme interest—a tragic picture of actual humanity whereas Prometheus is as he ought to be. In both the plays, *Promethens Unbound* and *The Cenci*, Shelley deals with the theme of tyranny, but in the latter play, the reality becomes so overpowering that it grips the heart of the audience with awe, the more so because here the victim is so weak. Tyranny is inflicted on both the body and the soul of a soft and sweet creature. The atmosphere in *Promethaus Unbound* is idealistic and characters look demi-gods and

goddesses. In *The Cenci* the atmosphere is realistic and characters are of the earth earthy. The spectacle is often terrible in its impact as in Act III. i. where Beatrice says to her mother "...Here Mother, tie/My girdle for me, and bind up this hair/In any simple knot ." Soliloquies are perhaps more than required, yet they do not sound monotonous. There are other defects like slow action, too many speeches, frequent scene changing. But despite these defects and despite the lurid background, as a drama it becomes a heart-rending tragedy of the highest magnitude. Shakespeare nearly always ended his tragedy with a hopeful note, but Shelley's drama does not. There is Fortinbras at the end of Hamlet's tragedy with his broad shoulders. In the tragic world of Shelley there remains Bernardo—a mere boy. And this, perhaps, is significant of Shelley's own faith—none too sanguine—about the future of humanity. Perhaps he felt that the world must wait for a Prometheus before it is liberated from the appalling tyranny which was grinding life, hope and faith out of man, in his own age. Thus in this play Shelley has been successful in making a fusion of actual reality and a human problem of eternal significance. We should note another point—the nature of action in this play is internal and psychological, the sordid realistic backdrops notwithstanding.

*Hellas* (c 1821 ; 1822) is a lyrical drama in the Greek dramatic form, modelled upon the *Persae* of Aeschylus. Inspired by the Greek declaration of independence from the Turkish yoke, Shelley unfolds the story of Salamis in terms of contemporary warfare and makes a prophecy of Hellenic freedom. There is scarcely anything in this drama that has any interest to-day. But the beauty of the choruses has been widely recognised—especially the last chorus. For Shelley the nineteenth century political outlook was gloomy but not hopeless. In the first stanza the 'singing god' in Shelley enlarges the hope of humanity :

The World's great age begins anew  
The golden years return,  
The earth doth like a snake renew  
Her winter weeds outworn ;  
Heaven smiles, and faiths and empires gleam,  
Like wrecks of a dissolving dream ( 1060-5).

In the last stanza he frantically appeals to the goodness of people and warns :

Oh ; Cease I drain not to its dregs the urn  
Of bitter prophecy.  
The world is weary of the past,  
Oh, might it die or rest at last ( 1096-1101 ).

Shelley himself believes that "the final chorus is indistinct and obscure, as the event of the living drama whose arrival it foretells. Prophecies of wars and rumours of wars, etc, may safely be made by poet or prophet in any age, but to anticipate however darkly a period of regeneration and happiness is a more hazardous exercise of the faculty which bards possess or feign." (See 'Shelley's Notes' to *Hellas*, No.7.) We have only to say that 'this hazardous exercise of faculty' Shelley really possessed and not merely feigned. But, then, it may produce good poetry and not good drama.

In *Oedipus Tyrannus, or Swell-foot the Tyrant* (1820) we find a new kind of drama unexpected from the pen of Shelley—a dramatic satire modelled on the satiric comedies of Aristophanes whose *Frogs* it recalls by its chorus of Pigs. The plot is based on King George IV's matrimonial relations with Queen Caroline—one of the most unsavoury episodes in the history of the early nineteenth century. As a drama, it fails to deliver the goods despite Shelley's resolution to be strictly objective henceforth in his attempts at drama writing. There are extravagant speeches, outrageous characters and revolting setting. The contemporary affair adds some sort of realism. (Even many characters have their originals. See N.I. White, "Shelley's Swell-foot the Tyrant: In Relation to Contemporary Political Satires", *PMLA*, XXXvi; New Series, XXIX (1921), pp. 332-346). This drama at least demonstrated again, as did the poem *Peter Bell the third*, how Shelley watched developments in England, not from the point of view of a visionary but as a socially conscious citizen who can see through the fun of things. The play is a product of a mature mind and shows that Shelley was slowly developing an objective view about the realities of the external world.

In *Charles the First* (1822) Shelley comes nearest to the neutrality a dramatist should have. He wanted "to write a play in the spirits of human nature, without prejudice and passion".

Some eight hundred lines of the *Charles* are full of steady power. We should note that it was not Shelley's intention in this work to celebrate the overthrow of a tyrant by democratic revolutionaries. Charles is a tragic figure because he could not extricate himself from a political situation not of his making, and the events in which he was involved have little meaning in a platonic scheme. Both the organization of the play and the language show a marked indebtedness to Shakespeare. Shelley saw the great poets of all times as faced with the same problems and concerned with the same ideas. Therefore, the work of all earlier poets serves as inspiration to those who follow. This is a lesson one can get from the play.

The clash between the king and the queen—one gentle, the other impetuous, is enough to create dramatic tension. Really speaking, *Charles* contains the germs of a true drama and marks an advance over *The Cenci* in that its depiction of misery is living and realistic. If completed, the play would have been a major tragedy.

With the *Fragments of an Unfinished Drama* (1822) Shelley seems to return to the idealistic and romantic atmosphere of *Prometheus Unbound*. The setting here is full of supernatural colours and love is again the central theme. An enchantress rescues a Pirate from a storm. He is loved by a lady who is temporarily deserted. When the Pirate comes back to his lady love, the enchantress opens hell's fury against him. The Pirate is brought to her island through a magic storm. In the meantime, a benign spirit brings the forsaken lady to the island. The accompanying youth loves her passionately though she has a sisterly affection for him. The consequences follow. The love entanglements are the real dramatic interest in the play and the conflict between the mortal love and supernatural passion heightens the dramatic effect. It may be a far-fetched surmise but we cannot resist the temptation of suggesting a link between the plot of this fragment with the Harriet affair, though, according to Mary Shelley, "it was undertaken for the amusement of the individuals". If this guess can be proved to be true, the supernatural setting will then turn out to be a camouflage for projecting a secret personal reaction of Shelley at Harriet's alleged unfaithfulness and the spell Mary Godwin cast on him. Be it as it may, the characters of the play have some human attributes unlike those in *Prometheus Unbound*. Even then, the unfinished fragment looks more as an unfinished poem than an 'Unfinished drama'.

In this brief survey of Shelley's dramatic writings perhaps it has been made clear that Shelley, the poet does not much differ from Shelley, the dramatist. He is almost always the seer, the prophet, gifted with a deep insight into the true nature of reality and this reality may not always be immediate or temporal or merely based on visible phenomena but may embrace the timeless in its essential unity. The phenomenal also has to depend on reality, as the flame has to depend on the wick, but the poet's task and for that matter a poet-playwright's task, is also to reveal the absolute, for as Shelley says, "he beholds the future in the present".

“THE FOUNTAIN AND SPRAY OF LIFE  
AND THE BEAK OF BRASS” :  
MR. AND MRS. RAMSAY IN  
*TO THE LIGHTHOUSE*

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P. P. SHARMA

Virginia Woolf's diary entry for May 14, 1925 reads : "This *To The Lighthouse* is going to be fairly short ; to have father's character done complete in it ; and mother's ; and St. Ives ; and Childhood ; and all the usual things I try to put in—life, death etc. But the centre is father's character, sitting in a boat, reciting, We perished, each alone while he crushes a dying mackerel".<sup>1</sup> This was at the time when the novel was on the stocks. After completing it, she recorded her reaction to her father's obsessive and morbidly haunting memory on November 28, 1928, thus : "Father's birthday. He would have been 96 .... His life would have entirely ended mine. What would have happened. No writing ; no books ;—inconceivable."<sup>2</sup> It is evident that the novelist had initially projected *To The Lighthouse* at least partly to lay the ghost of her father ; the recollections she had of him were none too endearing. Engaged on what was essentially an act of personal exorcism, she anticipated the kind of comment such an unsympathetic portrayal of her father Sir Leslie Stephen, the well-known Victorian man of letters, would occasion : "People will say I am irreverent".<sup>3</sup> That she had a fairly fixed notion of her father's rather limited nature and temperament is borne out by the fact that she could not, even while examining him in retrospect with some measure of detachment, vouch for his paternal affection and solicitude more emphatically than in these words : "not all his mathematics together with a bank balance which he insisted must be ample in the extreme, could persuade him, when it came to signing a cheque, that the whole family was not shooting Niagara to ruin. The relations between parents and children today have a freedom that would have been impossible with my father. He expected a certain standard of behaviour, even of ceremony, in family life."<sup>4</sup>

In contrast with him, the mother called forth a warmer and much more personal response. When she died, the little girl of thirteen was so prostrate with grief as to contemplate suicide.<sup>5</sup> Premature death of one so near possibly accentuated the would-be author's idealizing tendency. Virginia Woolf's feminist bias is writ large in some of her non-fictional works. In an intimate confidential note she has no hesitation in committing herself to such a partisan point of view: "The egotism of men surprises and shocks me even now...the male atmosphere is disconcerting to me... I think what an abrupt precipice cleaves asunder the male intelligence, and how they pride themselves upon a point of view which much resembles stupidity."<sup>6</sup> It is likely that this prejudice exalted the mother while, being reinforced by some "complicated variety of the Oedipus complex", it took a few cubits off the father's stature. It would be helpful to have some idea as to what the novelist was trying to accomplish rather than be terribly squeamish about "the fallacy of intention".

In this paper an attempt is made to indentify some of those artistic devices of indirection and narrative strategies which enable Mrs. Woolf to maintain a facade of detachment and neutrality and then gradually and almost imperceptibly to introduce some kind of moral judgment. It is true that she displays great skill and virtuosity in holding the balance between Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay: nevertheless, she is manipulating the reader's emotional response in such a way that eventually he comes to regard Mr. Ramsay a ridiculous and slightly pathetic character and Mrs. Ramsay superior to and of finer fibre than her husband.

It is easy for a casual reader to be so taken in by the surface brilliance of *To The Lighthouse* as to completely miss the underlying motive or the central thematic concern of the novelist. The artist Lily Briscoe, musing about her painting, observes: Beautiful and bright it should be on the surface, feathery and evanescent; one colour melting into another like the colours on a butterfly's wings; but beneath the fabric must be clamped together with bolts of iron. It was a thing you could ruffle with your breath, and a thing you could not dislodge with a team of horses".<sup>7</sup> The colours, as one cannot help realizing, are gorgeously splashed. The reader feels as though he were moving about in a world of poetic enchantment. But Mrs. Woolf is totally unlike a decadent aesthete; nor does she cast her spell for its seductive influence. A fabric and a design has been very firmly lodged. A well-thought-out dialectic holds together this gossamer-like world of fragile beauty. Roger Fry, a member of Mrs. Woolf's Bloomsbury group, woefully complained that comparatively few novelists have ever conceived of the novel as a single perfectly

organic aesthetic whole. Virginia Woolf, it appears, had a strong aversion for a novel that contained picturesque descriptions, fine rhetoric, purple patches and lofty sentiment, as these pseudo-poetic tricks, she believed, only detract from its true worth. That she took some pains about the scaffolding of *To The Lighthouse* is revealed by the remark : "Some one had blundered".(31) The ostensible occasion of its first occurrence is Mr Ramsay's bearing down on Lily and William Banks and his feeling uneasy and a little ashamed. Repeated nine times over, it gathers overtones and implications that seem to far exceed its apparent context. The speaker Mr Ramsay is quite certain that someone other than himself has blundered. He is very far from feeling that any blame can attach to himself. Completely identifying himself with the fine figure of a soldier charging at the head of his troops in Tennyson's poem, he is holding somebody else, perhaps his wife, guilty for things going sadly awry in his life. Mrs Woolf has, in this oblique fashion, announced that her main concern in this novel would be to undertake a comparative evaluation of husband and wife.

The first part 'The Window' brings out the divergence between Mr and Mrs Ramsay. Their six-year old son has set his heart on going to the lighthouse but his spirits are dashed by his father's admonition that they cannot make the trip as "it won't be fine tomorrow". The mother, on the other hand, gives him succour, deals with him compassionately and offers him some hope to hold on to : "Perhaps you will wake up and find the sun shining and the birds singing... Perhaps it will be fine tomorrow". Her playing around with 'perhaps', 'but', and 'even if' shows her eagerness to help him out by keeping various possibilities open ; Mr Ramsay's cold and rigid posture, however, thoroughly negates them. With the adoption of contradictory positions by husband and wife the reader is left in a quandary. Being a little convinced that Mr Ramsay's annoyance has some basis, the reader somewhat softens towards him : "The extraordinary irrationality of her remark, the folly of women's minds enraged him...she flew in the face of facts, made her children hope what was utterly out of the question, in effect, told lies."(50) However, pretty soon, he is pulled up with a jerk by what sounds like the authorial comment : "But what had she said ? Simply that it might be fine. So it might".(50) The reader loses whatever little ground he thought he had covered and thus, disoriented and puzzled, he would like to keep his judgment for the time being in abeyance. By urging extenuating circumstances in favour of each, she has implicitly instructed the reader to avoid making a hurried judgment. Human nature, she seems to be saying in effect, is much too complicated, baffling, enigmatic and multi-



dimensional to be fitted into conventional categories. "People in her books", says David Cecil, "are shown as happy and sad, beautiful and ugly but seldom as bad and good."<sup>8</sup> She draws her main characters in the round.<sup>9</sup> The modern mind, as she herself puts it, is a "queer conglomeration of incongruous things". How apt it is to incorporate the polarities of beauty and ugliness she very well illustrates in "The Narrow Bridge of Art": "It is a springnight, the moon is up, the nightingale singing. The willows bending over the river. Yes, but at the same time a diseased old woman is picking over her greasy rags on a hideous iron bench"<sup>10</sup> Even a character so far from being sympathetic as Charles Tansley evokes the kind of response from Mrs Ramsay which can be taken as reflecting the novelist's own ambivalence, her own desire to judge a person in terms of a multiple perspective: "Yet he looked so desolate; yet she would feel relieved when he went; yet she would see that he was better treated tomorrow; yet he was admirable with her husband; yet his manners certainly wanted improving; yet she liked his laugh" (174). Neither husband nor wife is delineated as an angel or as a thoroughly blameworthy person. Both have their share of human foibles and weaknesses along with their merits and strengths. Mr Ramsay possesses splendid intellectual powers; he is totally dedicated to his scholarly pursuits. But he is so possessed by ambition that at times he gives one the impression of being quite callous and indifferent to other's feelings. He would not alter a single disagreeable word to save his son's anguish and disappointment. But we also see how weak and alienated he is; how helplessly he craves for warmth and assurance of love. Slightly changing Forster's words, one can say that he is not just a figure of fun;<sup>11</sup> he is also pathetic; an object both of satire and compassion. Similarly, it would be absurd to contend that Mrs. Ramsay is to be taken for a paragon of perfection. Her heart is in the right place; she is a genuine person trying to be helpful and sympathetic to others. Although it seems like proving a thesis to maintain that she is like the old matriarch anxious to extend her dominion,<sup>12</sup> it can, however, be said that in her desire to be protective she is prone occasionally to riding roughshod over others' feelings. Moreover, she is not above slipping into clichés and self-deceiving phrases, e.g. "we are in the hands of the Lord". (97) The novelist's ambivalence is a sign of her nature grasp of human nature. Even such an object as the lighthouse has a dual character: "for nothing was simply one thing". As for men and women, one surely wanted fifty pairs of eyes to see them with. But from this it would be wrong to infer that Mrs. Woolf's fictional world is beset with a total moral confusion. Abjuring the time-honoured prerogative of the omniscient narrator and

abdicating her position as a final and absolute authority, Mrs. Woolf, however, does use some other indirect devices to express her preference for Mrs. Ramsay over her husband.

Mrs Ramsay represents the fecund female who, in her encounter with the arid and sterile male, seeks to replace the world of depersonalized concept and pure intellection and abstraction with one of maternal warmth and compassionate understanding and even, if need be, of comforting illusion. To her husband's gloomy weather forecast, factually correct as it is, she opposes a humane response and imaginative gesture. This polarity between their basic attitudes is perceived in the view that each takes of the lighthouse. To her it was a "silvery, misty-looking tower with a yellow eye that opened suddenly, and softly in the evening". (276) whereas to Mr. Ramsay it was simply "a stark tower on its bare rocks above the chaos of the sea". The fairy tale of the fisherman's wife that she reads to James chimes in with her plan to protect him from exposure to harsh reality. She is not at all punctilious about literal "truth". Without any qualms of conscience she can indulge in a bit of equivocation about the boar's skull if that helps satisfy both her son and daughter. To the former she can testify that it was there on the nursery wall although she had wrapped it round with her shawl: to the latter she can give the assurance that the hideous object was transformed into a fairy garden. Earlier, out of sheer compassion, she had retracted her statement about the weather to make her husband realize that momentary acerbity was nothing as compared with what bound each to the other. By yielding to his desire to be assured of her love, she experiences an ineffable bliss. For Mr Ramsay it is very hard indeed to step outside his own confined ego; to project himself into others' mental state is well beyond him. He suffers terribly from an ego-centric view of the world. The way he is shown engaged in a grim, relentless battle with "subject, object and the nature of reality" smacks not a little of the mock-heroic: "Still, if he could reach R it would be something. Here at least was Q. He dug his heels in at Q. Q he was sure of. Q. he could demonstrate ...Then R...He braced himself. He clenched himself" (54) Like a dauntless soldier, he fancies, he is being stormed at with shots and shells; he shivers and quivers. One cannot help being struck by his grandiose reflections on his own behalf; "Who then could blame the leader of that forlorn party which after all has climbed high enough to see the waste of years and the perishing of stars, if before death stiffens his limbs beyond the power of movement he does a little consciously raise his numbed fingers to his brow, and square his shoulders, so that when the search party comes they will find him dead at his post, the fine

figure of a soldier? Mr Ramsay squared his shoulders and stood very upright by the urn". (56) What Mrs Woolf is trying to say here is that in his pursuit of the nature of reality of the objective universe Mr Ramsay ignores any other subjectivity except his own which makes him inhuman and callous; and that he is particularly deficient in his ability (to use Forster's motto) "only to connect", with the result that he can neither lump all the letters of the alphabet in a flash, nor can he view his own individual endeavour in proper perspective. This brave fighter, moreover, is a self-pitying kind of person; "The lizard's eye flickered...The veins on his forehead bulged" (54).

Like the man busy with "matters of consequence" who has neither smelled a flower nor looked at a star<sup>13</sup>, Mr Ramsay has no eye for the geraniums in the urn (54), nor for other flowers (102), nor, for that matter, for his daughter's beauty. (107) Mrs. Woolf reiteratively expresses her dislike of the professional scholar who, because of his pedantry and egotistical arrogance, finds nothing of interest in simple objects of nature. In "All About Books" she mocks the erudite scholar who does not know that the sun is in the sky or the bird is on the branch.<sup>14</sup> In Mrs Ramsay, on the other hand, there is something that corresponds and responds to nature. While carts are grinding past her on the cobbles, she cannot help crying out in ecstasy at the sight of the bay. The monotonous fall of the waves on the beach "beat a measured and soothing tattoo to her thought". (27) To others thinking of her, pictures of flowers readily suggest themselves. Banks remarks: "The Graces assembling seemed to have joined hands in meadows of asphodel to compose that face". (47) While walking with her, even a dry-as-dust like Charles Tansley "felt the wind, and the cyclamen and the violets." He casts, although for a short time, all unworthy thoughts from his mind as he sees her "stepping through fields of flowers and taking to her breast buds that had broken and lambs that had fallen; with the stars in her eyes and the wind in her hair." (25)

As Mrs Ramsay sits brooding over the sights and sounds of nature, her vision penetrates to something mysterious hidden behind them. Transcending her individual self, she achieves a communion with a larger something. All the fret and hurry and stir is gone, and a strange sense of peace and rest descends on her. It is by reducing herself into "a wedge-shaped core of darkness" (95) that she enters into a trance-like state. Vivid moments of what seems like spiritual ecstasy come to her while she is engaged in apparently simple and humdrum acts like measuring the stockings, talking to the maid or Tansley, or just being silent or simply looking at the sea. Epiphanies or revelations occur at the least

likely places and times, like "matches struck unexpectedly in the dark." (240) This mystic trait in Mrs Ramsay is easily traceable to something in her creator which made her look for reality—normally so elusive and evasive—"in the downs or the sky".<sup>15</sup> Virginia Woolf regards 'Reality' as something very erratic and undependable—a veritable will-o'-the-wisp which can be found "in a dusty road", "in a scrap of newspaper", "in the street" "a daffodil in the sun" and "in an omnibus in the uproar of Piccadilly".<sup>16</sup> Emily Bronte got a glimpse of the transcendent reality while kneading dough or peeling potatoes in the kitchen at Haworth.<sup>17</sup> Mrs Ramsay also stumbles upon her moments of "luminous halo" while doing her far-from exciting domestic chores. The ironical contrast suggested here is that although the exploration of Reality is within the area of Mr Ramsay's specialization, it is his wife rather than he who comes to grips with Reality. So rich is she in her intuitive understanding and sensibility that she is literally surprised by Reality whereas Mr Ramsay, so agonizingly labouring after it, finds it beyond his reach.

How Mr and Mrs Ramsay serve as a foil to each other is often brought out through images which implicatively point out that the novelist's sympathies are ranged on the side of Mrs. Ramsay. A common source of misinterpretation can be located in the reader's inadequate grasp of Mrs Woolf's use of images and metaphors which are on a fairly high and sophisticated level of consciousness. Q.D. Leavis very aptly observes,...her (Mrs. Woolf's) thoughts and perceptions inevitably flower into images like a poet's. The complex mode of feeling can only be conveyed thus in images, with just as much indication of the sense as will serve as a springboard to the reader".<sup>18</sup> Mrs Ramsay's unruffled composure in the face of her husband's rude and provocative behaviour is expressed thus: "She bent her head as if to let the pelt of jagged hail, the drench of dirty water, bespatter her unrebuked." (61) The confrontation of Mrs. Ramsay's sympathetic response with Mr Ramsay's arrogant intellectuality and unswerving devotion to hard logical fact is described thus: "...into this delicious fecundity, this fountain and spray of life, the fatal sterility' of the male plunged itself like a bake of brass, barren and bare." (55) Mr. Ramsay's heartless, undeviating allegiance to factual accuracy is revealed through images which inflict pain and injury on the consciousness of other characters. James feels like reaching for an axe or a poker as he finds his father standing "lean as a knife, narrow as the blade of one." (10) To him his mother seems to be offering all she has to his father; the latter, however, is callous and insensitive: "James felt all her strength flaring up to be drunk and quenched by the beak of brass, the arid scimitar of the male, which smote

mercilessly, again and again..." (59) This is how the boy's delicate sensibility is affected by the contrasting images of his parents : "(He) felt her rise in a rosy—flowered fruit tree laid with leaves and dancing boughs into which the beak of brass, the arid scimitar of his father... plunged and smote..." (60) To the impressionable child, the mother "seemed to fold herself together, one petal closed in another..." (60), whereas the father is "that fierce sudden black winged harpy, with its talons and its beak all cold and hard. that struck and struck at you...The black wings spread and the hard beak tore". (273-274) Mrs. Ramsay's benevolent and creative influence is suggested by the images of fertility (for example, her green shawl, her worry to get the green house repaired), of warmth, of setting everything aglow. The images associated with Mr. Ramsay, however, are dark, brutal, violent and corrosive : a waggon crushing somebody's foot purple. The domestic scene that James recalls after ten years resembles a garden with growing trees and flowers in bloom and everything bathed in light. No harsh or raucous sound. A pleasant breeze playing with the blinds. Tall brandishing red and yellow flowers. Everybody going about his appointed task with natural rhythm. Everything was suddenly thrown out of gear with the wheel going over somebody's foot. James broods : "...something stayed and darkened over him ; would not move ; something flourished up in the air, something arid and sharp descended even there, like a blade, a scimitar, smiting through the leaves and flowers even of that happy world and making it shrivel and fall." (276) Standing alone on a spit of land, Mr Ramsay symbolises the picture of a desolate sea-bird. (60) The way he disturbs the harmony and sets in commotion reminds Mrs. Ramsay "of the great sea lion at the Zoo tumbling backwards after swallowing his fish and walloping off so that the water in the tank washes from side to side..." (52) The dislike and loathing that Lily feels for Mr Ramsay's intellection, abstraction and conceptualization is effectively conveyed through the image of a scrubbed kitchen table. This image is arrived at by thinking away all such palpable, delightful things as "the silver-bossed bark of the three" or the "fish-shaped leaves." It is indeed an excruciatingly painful mental effort—and it epitomises the kind of life Mr Ramsay is living—to reduce lovely evenings, with all their flaming clouds and blue and silver to a white deal four-legged table. How pathetic to pass one's days in "this seeing of angular essences". (38)

Mrs Woolf, as if in an attempt to have an outsider comment on Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay, makes Lily's evaluation available. Coming back after an interregnum of a decade, she recalls scenes of Mr Ramsay's petulance, his flying off into tantrums and trying to lord it over his wife.

The loud slamming of the doors still reverberates in her ears. She regards his "bearing down on her" like the approach of ruin and chaos". (221) Anxious to avoid too close a proximity with him, she hopes that the easel will serve as a kind of barricade to ward him off. That man of ubiquitous presence is demanding and exacting in the extreme: "...he permeated, he prevailed, he imposed himself...that man never gave; that man took...Mrs. Ramsay had given. Giving, giving, giving, she had died..." (223) Even when he takes his son and daughter to the lighthouse, they are coerced and their spirits are subdued. Drawn acquiescent in their father's wake, they show a pallor in their eyes. (231) Mrs Ramsay's triumph over her arrogant husband was, Lily recalls, due to her humility and self-surrender which covered her face with the radiance of ineffable joy.

Mrs Woolf indicts Mr Ramsay for his failure to develop significant relationship with others. Eaten up with the ambition to reach 'R' or to scale dizzy heights of personal glory, very much after the fashion of Ibsen's master builder Helvard Solness, he regrets the time spent in social intercourse. His dealings with his wife and children and the guests are not only superficial but also marked by bitterness and acrimony, Mrs Ramsay, in contrast with him, has a passion, bordering almost on a mania, to bring people together and to achieve effective rapport with them. It would not be out of place to mention here that G. E. Moore, the Cambridge philosopher from whom the Bloomsbury Group derived some of its basic attitudes and about whom Mrs Woolf said, "He has brought a new mind into the world, he has given us a new way of feeling and seeing,"<sup>19</sup> lays great emphasis on personal affections and aesthetic enjoyment. To quote Moore at some length: "By far the most valuable things which we can know or imagine, are certain states of consciousness, which may be roughly described as the pleasures of human intercourse and the enjoyment of beautiful objects. No one, probably, who has asked himself the question, has ever doubted that personal affection and the appreciation of what is beautiful in Art or Nature, are good in themselves; nor, if we consider strictly what things are worth having *purely for their own sakes*, does it appear probable that anyone will think that anything else has nearly so great a value as the things which are included under these two heads... Personal affections and aesthetic enjoyments include *all* the greatest, and *by far* the greatest, goods we can imagine"...<sup>20</sup>

The way Mr and Mrs Ramsay do their reading clearly indicates their different attitudes towards a work of art and beauty, (We have already noticed their different responses to beautiful objects in their *milieu*.

While reading Scott, Mr Ramsay is trying to assure himself that he too will not be forgotten by posterity. Similarly he reads himself into Tennyson's and Cowper's poems. Mrs Ramsay, on the other hand, gives herself up to reading poetry with complete abandon and self-effacement and is absolutely free from any ulterior thought or motive. Echoing the very spirit of Moore Mrs Woolf asks : "Are there not some pursuits that we practise because they are good in themselves, and some pleasures that are final ?" It can be surmised that Mrs Ramsay belongs to that category of readers about whom the Almighty will say to Peter, "Look, these need no reward. We have nothing to give them here. They have loved reading."<sup>21</sup>

Personal relationship is the *forte* of Mrs Ramsay. Charles Tansley is an insufferable prig and one is certainly justified in finding it less painful to have dinner with Anna Karenina's husband and listening to the cracking of his finger joints<sup>22</sup> than to be exposed to the ugly academic jargon of this presumptuous scholar. Bankes, the distinguished botanist, looks upon conversational trivia as so much interference with his work. Carmichael, the poet of the desert and the camel, is a social blunderer. Lily Briscoe is continually chafing at her failure to get the right proportion and balance on her canvas. The company that gathers at the Ramsays is, in all conscience, a discordant and a heterogeneous one. Yet in the climactic dinner scene Mrs Ramsay's presence does something even to the most intractable of them. Over the pernicky and stand-offish Lily Briscoe comes the emotion, the vibration of love. The aggressive and conceited Charles Tansley is put at his ease by her tolerance and good humour. Minta and Paul are both aglitter with a secret happiness. Mr Ramsay, partaking as it were of the general spirit of youth and gaiety, drops, temporarily though, the burdens of his labours. (149) Also, he tries to make amends for his rude behaviour with Carmichael, who, in his turn, forgetting his carping comments on Mrs Ramsay, experiences a relaxation of spirits and "bowed to her as if he did her homage". (167) As for Bankes, all his old love and reverence for Mrs Ramsay returns. (151) Mrs Ramsay's characteristic acts of knitting and writing letters are a symbolic expression of her desire to integrate people. In this she bears a strong resemblance to Mrs Wilcox in Forster's *Howards End* who connects the two opposite worlds of panic and telegrams on the one hand and that of the cultured Schlegels on the other.

Mrs Ramsay has another close parallel in Mrs Moore in Forster's *A Passage to India*. The influence of each extends beyond life to heal up old wounds and lead estranged persons to a rapprochement. Both

James and Can believe that their father has acted like a tyrant or a slave-driver. They vow in silence to "stand by each other and carry out the great compact—to resist tyranny to the death". (243) This, however, does not seem to work as there is some relenting on the part of Can. A look comes upon her face which reminds James of an earlier scene in which his mother, with his father standing over her, laughed and surrendered. In undertaking the trip to the lighthouse Mr Ramsay is trying to expiate the past by performing a rite in honour of the deceased. This reflects, as David Daiches points out, his resolve "to make contact with a truth outside oneself, to surrender the uniqueness of one's ego to an impersonal reality."<sup>28</sup> All her dilemmas resolved, Lily finally claims "I have had my vision". (310) So overpowering is the posthumous influence of Mrs Ramsay.

It is perhaps worth noting that Mr Ramsay is most of the time depicted as walking up and down the terrace. This is meant to show that he is fretful, petulant and uneasy. The picture of Mrs Ramsay which lingers in the reader's mind is that of a reclining woman, at peace with herself and the rest of the world. Mr Ramsay with something hard and stiff about him can only hurt and lacerate; to give a healing touch is not for him. Everything about him suggests infliction of pain, disruption of harmony. He is "the beak of brass", an unrelenting instrument of torture. Mrs Ramsay, on the other hand, sustains and nourishes life. She is "the fountain and spray of life". Jars and discords fall away under her influence.

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17 See especially the stanzas of Julian M. and A.O. Rochelle describing how the invisible dawns, how the unseen reveals its truth while the outward sense of the experiencing Person is gone. (C.W. Hatfield, ed., *The Complete Poems of Emily Jane Bronte*, London, 1952, p. 196.) St. Theresa describes the usual pattern of mystic apprehension thus: "The soul...seems to leave the organs which she animates...She falls into a sort of swoon...It is only with the greatest effort that she can make the slightest movement with her hands. The eyes close of themselves, and if they are kept open, they see almost nothing. If spoken to, the soul hears the sound of the voice but no distinct word." (Margaret Lane, "The Drug-like Bronte Dream", *Bronte Society Transactions*, 1952, p. 85.

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## LAISSEZ-FAIRE OF MIND—

### E. M. FORSTER'S ESSAYS

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H. P. MOHANTY

E. M. Forster is one of those writers whose private personality and the artistic personality are so integrated that it is wellnigh difficult to separate the two and estimate their distinctive worth. At any rate concentrating attention on the imaginative experiences of the novels alone would seriously impair the proper understanding of Forster because the one great quality that characterises his novels as well as essays, broadcast talks and newspaper articles, is a very discerning sensitiveness. This sensitiveness of E. M. Forster is unique in the sense that it is also gentle, suave and suggestive. The unobtrusiveness of the suggestiveness in the essays and talks is no sign of volatile understanding. The iridescent humour, the easy even cosy conversational rhythm, the "relaxed will" and the relaxed tone, the occasional expanded metaphor (e.g. his comparison of the English character to the sea), the "coy sprightliness" (Austin Warren) are no debits of the thinker's sensibility. He is one of the few artists and personalities whose visions are clear, whose thought processes are without the least muddle. What is more, they are always persuasive, without either the smallness of dogmatism or the fanfare of elaborate argument. The suggestiveness and persuasiveness of his discussions are due to the fact that Forster can reduce serious, difficult problems to their simple essences without in any way impairing their total significance. This reduction of complicated, controversial matters to their simplicities may, without the proper insight and understanding, be just mental paucity. But with proper discernment, with proper placing of a problem in its realistic perspective it may be illuminatingly elucidative. That is what Forster is constantly striving to do in his essays. Nowhere in his essays he strikes one to be a firebrand intellectual. But the stamp of an intelligent, sensible as well as sensitive consciousness is always felt. Take for instance three of his essays, "The Challenge of Our Time", "The Duty of the Society to the Artist" and "Does Culture Matter?" Forster does not, like Bertrand Russell and Aldous Huxley, attempt any elaborately discursive, analytic approach to these problems. But he gives insight. For instance, he says that the one simple way of

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meeting the challenge of our complex time is to cultivate the old 19th century morality and the new economics. The bane of 19th century life was *laissez-faire* economy which led to social, national and individual parochialism, consequently international divisiveness, disorder and disharmony. What we require in modern times is spiritual *laissez-faire*, that is, freedom in the sphere of creation, freedom in the world of spirit and controlled and planned orientation in the world of economics. This is both simple and sensible and what is more it is not an unrealistic, impractical solution. Similarly, the great problem of the general apathy and imperviousness of the utilitarian executive authorities to culture and creative endeavours is tackled in his own inimitable way in the other two essays. Mr Bumble is a typical executive authority, the officer of a police station. An artist comes along seeking a job. The police officer asks what sort of job he is fit for. The artist says, painting the walls of the police station. What use? asks Mr. Bumble. No use, only experimentation, only attempting to extend "the frontier of consciousness", replies the artist. Mr. Bumble has neither his instruction nor his patience for this kind of experiment and he dismisses the artist. Forster concedes that the police officer was right in his own way. But the police officer should have done better in permitting the artist to paint. He should have tolerated the artist's creative experiment. He should have maintained an open mind. This open-mindedness and tolerance, the inclination to see the other's point of view, is, according to Forster, a true sign of culture. And Democracy gets two cheers because it permits variety and criticism. But this appreciation of tolerance is not assertive. This is a great quality in Forster. He is confident without being militant. He does not believe in any faith with capital F. In other words, he does not believe in organised, institutional, aggressive principles, beliefs and faiths. Instinctively he understands that an assertive kind of goodness—good ideas, good characters, good institutions—are self-abortive. What starts as sincere and worthwhile endeavour ultimately ends as repulsive imposition. Hence religious dogmatism, fanaticism, coterie contentions and crusades. Forster advocates quiet, cooperative, clean endeavours, unassertive beliefs like tolerance, like love, like the joy of creative pursuits, like freedom, order, harmony. Love in the sense of understanding, sympathy, compassion is a great value in Forster's writings. This comes out best in his attitude towards Indians. That Forster loves India and Indians is very well-known. Without a very sensitive, sympathetic mind Forster could not have portrayed the king as he did in the "Hill of Devi." To bring out the eccentricities and royal

aberrations of the king along with the endearing features is something unique. His retort to a chorus of indignant colonels in connection with his second visit to India is characteristic of his mind and style. When the colonels protested, "Fancy sending out old gentlemen who fall ill and can do no possible good," he replied, "Old I am, gentleman I may or may not be, ill I was not. I have never felt better. And did I do any good? Yes, I did. I wanted to be with Indians and was, and that is a very little step in the right direction." The last sentence conveys a faith, but it is a quiet little faith towards a great understanding, understanding the political relationship which in the last analysis is, or should be, a human relationship. Personal relationship is the chief credo of E. M. Forster. It was fed by the revolution in philosophy at Cambridge at the turn of the century which led to a "strong emphasis on the centrality and significance of personal relationships" (Malcolm Bradbury). This is the only value that matters to him significantly, so much so that he prefers betraying his nation to betraying his friend where the two loyalties clash. The rational foundations of personal relationship are laid down in the essay "What I Believe." Forster does not believe in ideals, especially when they are presented in organised form. Any planned, organised creed repels him. So do heroes. Heroes and hero-worship are repulsive to him. Carlyle's *Hero and Hero-worship* influenced him negatively. It foreshadowed Hitler. Hitler and Nazism he intensely disliked and it is in that connection he made a beautiful remark. That, in the first world war, England and Germany had been at war. But they were hostile within one civilisation. But the second World War was a clash between two principles—one, civilisation; the other anti-civilisation. Nazism is horrid because it is a hostile principle. Hostile principle is more harmful than hostile nation within the same principle. Even at the level of personal relationship, two individuals embodying two hostile principles impinge on each other adversely despite best of good intentions and Initiative. His humorous skit on Voltaire and Frederick the Great is a study of this serious theme. Voltaire fled away from Frederick's Berlin with a lesson. "Berlin had taught him that if a man believes in liberty and variety and tolerance and sympathy he cannot breathe the air of the totalitarian state. It may seem all nice on the surface—but. The tyrant may be charming and intelligent—but. The machinery may work perfectly—but. Something is missing: the human spirit is missing. Voltaire kept faith with the human spirit."

Such relationship may not result in any striking success. Success is the goal of heroic men, great men, perhaps success at any cost. In fact, only success defines great men, places them securely in life. But

small, hearty personal relationships are continuously creative. The lives of great men—determined, ambitious, success—hunting men—are simple, almost naive. Heroic creeds and heroic quest of success are awfully simple and awfully constrictive of life. They are, in a sense, negation of life, for, life in its impact on man is always so complex, demanding always complex responses. Hitler was so naive in believing in the superiority of the Nordic race and the right of Germany to rule. Greatness is rejected by Forster on two counts—it is awful simplification and it is awful heartlessness. This gives us the clue why Forster disliked public schools. They certainly build well-developed body, and over-developed brain but they produce very under-developed heart.

Personal relationship is also preferred because Forster does not believe in the efficacy of the herd. That is why he does not accept Gerald Heard's theory of Colleges with trained psychologists who are to get at the dictators. Herd values are rejected, hero-worship too. There only remains the quiet, effective personal approach that will bring "love, peace, speech, light, the four columns of the temple of Osiris" that have long since been banished from earth. These values can be saved by the 'aristocracy of the sensitive, the considerate, the plucky.' Aristocracy of power mutilates sensitiveness. It is an irony of life that rise to power is fall to insensitiveness, callowness and evil. Sensitiveness and creativeness are the two great mental conditions that nourish love, speech, peace, light.

Forster's advocacy of personal relationship finds its concrete, creative groove in the novels. Though the end of each novel is a frittering failure of the god of personal relationship the ultimate impact of his art is never depressing. This is because of the serene philosophy of Forster's acceptance of the good-and-evil of life. Not the good and the evil of life, but the good-and-evil. This constitutes the serene comic vision or as Lionel Trilling would say the sane "moral realism" which, 'is not the awareness of morality itself but of contradictions, paradoxes and dangers of living the moral life.' Proportion is Forster's final secret. Proportion acquired through action, knowledge, and love. And this proportion cannot be achieved except through vital activity. To espouse it at the outset is to ensure sterility, just as preparation for personal relationship is the sure way to frustrate it. There are two ways of attaining the serenity of proportion. One, the ascent upward and then the descent; the mystic way; the sort of proportion that the Guru commands in "*Near and the Far*". Then there is the other, the way of culture, imagination, intelligence, understanding, the humanistic way, the way of the arts. That is Forster's way.

Forster's liberalism was Bloomsbury in character, yet it was critical of Bloomsbury. That's why the Bloomsbury ethos was suspicious of him. But perhaps Forster's Bloomsbury affiliations deprived him of "force and robustness of intelligence." Leavis says, "He seems then, for one so perceptive and sensitive, extraordinarily lacking in force or robustness of intelligence; it is, perhaps, a general lack of vitality." May be Forster lacks in the sort of robustness of intelligence or imagination that D.H. Lawrence and L.H. Myers or T.F. Powys command. But he has limpidity of intelligence, a luminous clarity and in his arch of vision there is no suspicion of fear, muddle and cant.

D.S. Savage is dispraisingly critical of Forster because he is savagely critical of the creed of liberalism. Liberalism, according to Savage, is a "half-hearted, compromising creed," compromising between actual living of men and women and the principles and values that govern their lives, paying "mental hostages to the realm of ideals and the world of affairs," incapable or afraid of total commitment to either. "The absolute is carefully excluded from the liberal way of life. The gesture towards the spirit is arrested, and modified into a gesture towards culture." But D.S. Savage fails to realize that commitment to the absolute, particularly the active sort of commitment, may result in violation and distortion of the absolute itself. That, in the ultimate analysis, the absolute can manifest its inviolation and integrity in the relative only. That balance, proportion, harmony, deeply considered, are in themselves absolutes.

# IMAGERY IN T.S. ELIOT'S POETIC DRAMA

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SUBHAS SARKAR

## I

An analysis of T.S. Eliot's plays reveals that a believer in tradition, T.S. Eliot wants to adapt poetic drama to the requirements of the modern realistic theatre which is quite antipathetic to poetry. Hence, his compromise formula of formalist-realist synthesis in poetic drama draws heavily upon a kind of poetic medium which can meet the challenge of prose as well as keep up the occasional overtones of the conventional form of poetry. Indeed, Eliot's dramatic poetry maintains a doubleness of action in drama : on the common, everyday level of experience which constitutes the surface action of the play, poetry is fed on a thin diet and almost conforms to the conventions of prose, and in select moments reaches the elevation of passionate poetry. This doubleness of action is also co-extensive with Eliot's avowed purpose of communicating religious (rather, Christian) emotion to the secular or neutral audience of the commercial theatre. For this he has to rely upon imagery and metrical pattern—the two great instruments of poetry which, as the situation demands, help to intensify and elevate the level of emotional experience. Since images "retain the power of physical universe and are therefore sympathetic to what in ourselves is linked up with the physical and organic,"<sup>1</sup> their sensuous structure and evocativeness create a touch of symbolism for the author's meanings and feelings. T.S. Eliot allows his dramatic poetry to act upon the audience of the commercial theatre almost imperceptibly, so that quite unobtrusively and yet effectively the verse medium is able to bring about undoubted emotional conversion. Hence, for offering convincing visual interpretation of reality, as well as for providing a symbolic extension of meaning of the action of the play imagery plays an important role in Eliot's drama. In Eliot's plays imagery is possibly the most powerful instrument with which the playwright achieves his end—communication of religious experience through transfiguration of reality.

Imagery in Eliot's drama, more or less, follows a set pattern. There is always an intertexture of animal and nature imagery or domestic and nature imagery in his plays, one set off by another. The animal-imagery,

undoubtedly stands for bestiality or lowly life, whereas nature-imagery produces a sense of awe and mystery. The superb skill with which Eliot weaves the pattern of images to differentiate the levels of meaning and experience in drama, is a definite proof of his adherence to the old classical principles of drama even in the realistic setting of the commercial theatre.

*Imagery in Murder in The Cathedral*

II

The imagery of *Murder in the Cathedral* can be broadly classified into two categories: elemental nature imagery and primal animal imagery—the former implicating the ritual of death and rebirth and the latter corruption and wretchedness of human existence. In fact, the twofold imagery drawn from nature and the animal kingdom represent the two distinct planes of existence; the physical and the spiritual, the bestial and the metaphysical. The opening Chorus uses a number of images which remind us of the great seasonal cycle and of everyday life of the primitive people with a view to developing the theme of the ritual of death and rebirth (or death and resurrection) enacted in the heart of nature. The Biblical episode of St. Peter stretching out his hand to the fire when he has denied his Master (Mark XIV, 66–68) is skilfully suggested to incorporate the idea of Christian ritual into the framework of Pagan ritual. Eliot's idea that drama springs from liturgy or for that matter ritual is the very tap-root of drama is elegantly rendered into the action of the play in the opening Chorus itself. The Charwomen of Canterbury evoke the lurid atmosphere in their Choric utterance which provide the backdrop to the murder in the cathedral. Indeed, through a network of nature-imagery Eliot is able to create the hoary background of medieval life which throws into relief the significance of martyrdom....? Take for instance:

And the apples were gathered and stored, and the land became  
brown sharp points of death in a waste of water and mud,  
The New Year waits, breathes, waits, whispers in darkness While  
the labourer kicks off a muddy boot and stretches his hand to  
the fire,  
The New Year waits, destiny waits for the coming Who has  
stretched out his hand to the fire, and remembered the saints at  
All Hallows,  
Remembered the martyr and saints who wait? and who shall  
Stretch out his hand to the fire and deny his master?

(*Murder in the Cathedral*, pp. 11-12)



Here the harvesting imagery symbolic of the end of a season and the commonplace imagery from every day life of workers create an intimate setting for the humdrum life of the poor women of Canterbury. The ritual of death and regeneration in the midst of nature, is also vividly suggested. Through a number of natural and agricultural images, the proximity of common people to nature in the Middle Ages has almost been graphically rendered :

The merchant, shy and cautious, tries to compile a little fortune,  
And the labourer bends to his piece of earth, earth-colour, his  
own colour.<sup>8</sup>

or

Root and shoot shall eat our eyes and our ears,  
Disastrous summer burn up the beds of our streams.<sup>4</sup>

A sense of fatalism which was very much associated with life in the Middle Ages is successfully hinted at in the following image :

And the saints and martyrs wait, for those who shall be martyrs  
and saints.

Destiny waits in the hand of God, shaping the still unshapen : I  
have seen these things in a shaft of sunlight. Destiny waits in the  
hand of God, not in the hands of Statesmen.<sup>5</sup>

Yet another image that occurs in the speech of the Third priest suggests the primitive life of the Middle Ages in which the action is set.

What peace can be found  
To grow between the hammer and the anvil ?<sup>6</sup>

No less significant is the Biblical image bearing out the medieval faith in Christ :

Shall the Son of Man be born again in the litter of scorn ?<sup>7</sup>

Apparently an analogy is drawn between Christ, the first martyr and Becket the martyr-designate with a view to underscoring the underlying theme of the play—martyrdom and its implications to men.

The analogy between Christ and Becket is also brought out in another Biblical image in the Herald's account of the homecoming of the Archbishop. Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem is meaningfully recalled even to such minor details as the colt being deprived of its tail (mentioned in Luke and Mathew) :

Who receive him with scenes of frenzied enthusiasm,  
Lining the road and throwing down their capes,  
Strewing the way with leaves and late flowers of the season.  
The streets of the city will be packed to suffocation,  
And I think that his horse will be deprived of its tail,  
A single hair of which becomes a precious relic.<sup>8</sup>

The priests want to have Becket amongst them to serve their own selfish end—to ensure stability of their own existence. A significant image drawn from nature is used by the Second Priest to drive home the idea of a sense of total dependence on Becket. The image of the rock at once reminds us of Eliot's earlier creations, *The Waste Land* and *The Rock*. Presumably the rock is used as a symbol of the Church and its authority :

We can lean on a rock, we can feel a firm foothold  
Against the perpetual wash of tides of balance of forces of barons  
and landholders.

The rock of God is beneath our feet. Let us meet the Archbishop  
with cordial thanksgiving

Our lord, our Archbishop returns.<sup>9</sup>

The primitive wheel imagery (which can stand for the great wheel of creation or the wheel of religion) is appropriately correlated by the Third Priest to the return of the Archbishop :

For good or ill, let the wheel turn.

The wheel has been still, these seven years, and no good.

For ill or good, let the wheel turn

For who knows the end of good or evil ?<sup>10</sup>

The sudden application of the wheel image also seems to set the action of the play in motion.

Eliot is able to suggest the common people's apprehension of death and disaster that might befall Becket and the world in the nature image used by the Chorus of the Charwomen of Canterbury :

Ill the wind, ill the time, uncertain the profit, certain the danger  
O late late late, late is the time, late too late, and rotten the year ;  
Evil the wind, and bitter the sea, and grey the sky, grey grey grey,  
O Thomas, return, Archbishop ; return, return to France.

This sense of fear gains in intensity as the Chorus articulates the complexity of common man's existence in an effective vegetable image :

And our hearts are torn from us ; our brains unskinned like the  
layers of an onion, our selves are lost lost

In a final fear which none understands.<sup>11</sup>

The Choric utterance of the Charwomen of Canterbury on the eve of the appearance of Becket contains an image drawn from the sea :

Thomas Archbishop

Set the white sail between the grey sky and the bitter sea, leave  
us, leave us for France<sup>12</sup>

The image of the white sail symbolizes their deep yearning for peace (peace, at any cost).

The animal imagery chosen by the Second Priest to take the Poor Women of Canterbury to task smartly parades the impatience of the priest to welcome Becket :

You go on croaking like frogs in the treetops :  
 But frogs at least can be cooked and eaten  
 Whatever you are afraid of in your craven apprehension  
 Let me ask you at the least to put on pleasant faces.<sup>14</sup>

Thomas Becket appears on the scene and gives a new dimension to the wheel imagery. If the wheel represents the process of creation, it also stands for suffering—suffering which is an integral part of life. Now this idea of suffering has a bearing on the theme of the play—martyrdom of Becket. One is reminded of the Buddhist wheel imagery which stands for the doctrine of *Prāṭitya Samutpāda*, the doctrine of dependent origination which looks upon creation as a continuum or flux. Thomas' speech on the eve of the appearance of the 1st Tempter, significantly combines animal imagery with stage imagery to suggest the duality of action in the play—on the physical as well as metaphysical plane :

For a little time the hungry hawk  
 Will only soar and hover, circling Lower  
 Waiting excuse, pretence, opportunity.  
 End will be simple, sudden, God-given  
 Meanwhile the substance of our first act  
 Will be shadows, and the strife with shadows  
 Heavier the interval than the consummation.<sup>15</sup>

In a sense Thomas offers us a summary of the whole action in the combined zoological and theatrical imagery. Elliot makes an effective use of imagery in bringing home to the audience the great temptation of the sensual life which the 1st Tempter offers to Becket :

Fluting in the meadows, viols in the hall  
 Laughter and apple blossom floating on the water  
 Singing at nightfall, whispering in chambers,  
 Fires devouring the winter season.<sup>16</sup>

The First Tempter's voice is, indeed, to Becket, the voice of his buried past—of the youthful, sensual life of his early years. In another image of the elemental seasonal cycle the bait of the sensual life is again offered by the First Tempter :

Spring has come in Winter. Snow in the branches  
 Shall float as sweet as blossoms. Ice along the ditches  
 Mirror the sunlight. Love in the orchard  
 Send the sap shooting.<sup>17</sup>

Becket is able to sum up the temptation offered by the First Tempter as

the desires of the subconscious mind trying to assert themselves in a clear idea-image :

Voices under sleep, waking a dead world,

So that the mind may not be whole in the present.<sup>18</sup>

The animal imagery is too frequently used in the play to alternate with nature imagery to offer a striking contrast between the base, physical existence and the spiritual and perennial. The second Tempter uses animal imagery to attenuate the Archbishop's spiritual entity :

The old stag, circled with hounds<sup>19</sup>

Your sin soars sunward, covering kings' falcons<sup>20</sup>

Even Becket's self-pride, which is but an offshoot of his baser self is distinctly portrayed in a neat animal image :

Shall I who ruled like an eagle over doves

Now take the shape of a wolf among wolves ?<sup>21</sup>

The Fourth Tempter uses fishing imagery to sum up the action of the three previous Tempters :

Hooks have been baited with morsels of the past.<sup>22</sup>

Possibly no better account of the activity of the first three Tempters could have been provided to the audience. Indeed the presence of such images intensifies the meaning and action of the play.

The most interesting moment in Part I of *Murder in the Cathedral* comes when the Fourth Tempter hurls back the wheel image at Becket himself to tempt him with his own ideas. The audience can feel how artistically and meticulously the dramatist has arranged the images in the play.

Eliot evinces great skill in the selection of images of elemental nature in the Choric utterance of the Charwomen of Canterbury which follows the speech of the Fourth Tempter. An unusual sense of spiritual discomfort and horror is here evoked by a pattern of nature imagery :

And the air is heavy and thick

Thick and heavy the sky. And the earth presses up against our feet.

What is the sickly smell, the vapour ? the dark green light from a cloud on a withered tree ? The earth is heaving to parturition of issue of hell. What is the sticky dew that forms on the back of my hand ?<sup>23</sup>

There is something awful and mysterious about the images combined together. Indeed, they seem to attain a symbolic extension of meaning. Eliot's dramatic device of the transfiguration of the commonplace reality by the magic of poetry is properly illustrated by this Choric utterance.

A sense of poetic ambivalence, which characterizes poetic drama is almost unobtrusively present in the Choric utterance of the Poor Women of Canterbury. There is also an uneasy sense of spiritual apprehension and despair in the final chorus of the first part of the play :

God is leaving us, God is leaving us, more pang more pain, than birth or death.

Sweet and clogging through the dark air

Falls the stifling scent of despair ;

The forms take shape in the dark air

Puss-purr of leopard, footfall of padding bear

Palm-pat of nodding ape, square hyaena waiting

For laughter. laughter, laughter. The Lords of Hell are here

They curl round you, lie at your feet, swing and wing

Through the dark air.<sup>24</sup>

Imagery is the most effective instrument by which Eliot is able to create this dramatic suspense on the eve of Becket's primary resolution.

I shall no longer act or suffer, to the sword's end.<sup>25</sup>

He does this with the help of a unique combination of zoological and idea-imagery.

Whereas the opening Chorus of Part I of *Murder in the Cathedral* speaks of the end of autumn and of the beginning of Winter, of harvesting, stock taking and gloom, that of Part II refers to the bursting of spring in nature, of the premonition of Becket's murder as a back-drop to resurrection of life. A selection of images chosen from nature, provides the atmosphere of spiritual discomfort experienced by the Chorus at the end of Part I. In fact the recurring imagery of the seasonal cycle sustains the emotion of spiritual discomfort experienced by the poor women of Canterbury. There is nevertheless a faint awareness of a sense of guilt hinted at by the Choric utterances which becomes stronger towards the close of the play.

And voices trill at windows, and children tumble in front of the door

What work shall have been done, what wrong

Shall the bird's song cover, the green tree cover, what wrong

Shall the fresh earth cover ? We wait, and the time is short

But waiting is long.<sup>26</sup>

Unlike Part I of the *Murder in the Cathedral*, Part II is rather sparse of images since the action of the play or its concentricity largely belongs to the first half. Part II which essentially unfolds the denouement concentrates on the Knights or bestiality. Hence, the abundance of animal imagery in the second half of the drama. But as the play closes

with the singing of Te Deum Choir, there is again the old breath of nature imagery that trips over the animal imagery for the final emotion of Christian humility.

The Knights' speeches are interspersed with animal imagery often suggesting a strong sense of corruption or bestiality. The three knights jointly mount an attack of invectives on Becket in their first meeting in a series of animal imagery which speaks of their base and unseemly attitude towards the Archbishop :

This is the creature that crawled upon the King; swollen with  
blood and swollen with pride.

Creeping out of the London dirt

Crawling up like a louse on your shirt.<sup>27</sup>

But Thomas' retort is quite dignified and cold, it is couched in clothes imagery which bears out his sense of detachment :

Then let your new coat of loyalty be worn

Carefully, so it get not soiled or torn.<sup>28</sup>

As the Knights impatiently run after Becket to set upon him the Chorus offers a magnificent apology on behalf of the sinning men who live in a kind of hell in which bestiality thrives. The Chorus presents groups of animal imagery revealing the bestiality of commonplace human existence :

I have heard

Fluting in the night-time, fluting and owls, have seen at noon

Scaly wings slanting over, huge and ridiculous. I have tasted

The savour of putrid flesh in the spoon. I have felt

The heaving of earth at nightfall, restless, absurd...

The living lobster, the crab, the oyster, the whelk and the prawn;  
and they live and spawn in my bowels, and my bowels dis-  
solve in the light of dawn.

What is woven in the councils of princes

Is woven in our veins, our brains,

Is woven like a pattern of living worms

In the guts of the women of Canterbury.<sup>29</sup>

The images are evocative of a strong sense of disgust and repulsion for a corrupt human existence that has been reduced to bestiality. Hence Thomas' assurance to the Chorus as well Priests is couched in idea-images which promise a better life :

But know that another

Shall pierce you with a sudden painful joy

When the figure of God's purpose is made complete <sup>80</sup>  
and

I have heard a tremor of bliss, a wink of heaven, a whisper,  
And I would no longer be denied,<sup>81</sup>

What Becket holds up is the promise of a new lease of life on the spiritual, rather, metaphysical plane. But in place of vague esoteric symbols Eliot chooses to employ aesthetic idea-images which have a compulsive sway over the spectator. Here the images retain their sensuous form yet remain indeterminate to offer a symbolic extension of meaning.

When the Knights set upon Becket the Chorus raises a wild protest against the pollution of the natural order. An awareness of the cosmic evil that overwhelms the Charwomen of Canterbury makes them almost cry out like Macbeth who seeks the protection of night.

Night stay with us, stop sun, hold season, let the day not come,  
let the spring not come.....<sup>82</sup>

Imagery of bloodshed and evil (perpetrated at night) occurs in the Choric utterance as it also appears in Macbeth. In fact, there is a remarkable affinity in the zoological images chosen by both Shakespeare and Eliot in their plays to describe the horror of bestiality and crime. But, while Shakespeare was interested in the metaphysic of evil Eliot had only an aversion for it. This aversion for evil becomes articulate in the Chorus yearning for purgation which is thrown into relief in a group of imagery.

Clear the air ! clean the sky I wash the wind I take the  
stone from the stone, take the skin from the arm,  
take the muscle from the bone, and wash them.<sup>83</sup>

Towards the close of the play the third Priest articulates his bitter feelings in respect of the murderous Knights in an interesting combination of nature and idea-images. This convincingly effaces the discordant note of the Knights' logic from the mind of the audience :

Go where the sunset reddens the last grey rock

Where the dead breath makes numb the hand, makes dull the  
brain ;

Find an oasis in the desert sun,

Forgetfulness in his libidinous courts  
Oblivion in the fountain by the date-tree ;  
Or sit and bite your nails in Aquitaine  
In the small circle of pain within the skull...<sup>84</sup>

The Te Deum Chorus finally eulogises the glory of creation and

acknowledges the great significance of the act of martyrdom which replenishes the earth with the promise of a new birth through an interesting assortment of nature images.

From where the western seas gnaw at the coast of Iona,  
To the death in the desert, the prayer in forgotten places by  
the broken imperial column,  
From such ground springs that which forever renews the earth  
Though it is forever denied. Therefore, O God, We  
thank Thee ..<sup>85</sup>

Through a careful selection of imagery of familiar day to day life Eliot throws into relief the great Christian sense of humility in the Chorus of the Charwomen of Canterbury :

Who fear the injustice of men less than the justice of God ;  
Who fear the hand at the window, the fire in the thatch,  
The fist in the tavern, the pisa into the canal,  
Less than we fear the love of God.  
Lord, have mercy upon us.  
Christ, have mercy upon us  
Blessed Thomas, pray for us<sup>86</sup>

This is a fitting close to a magnificent religious drama, Eliot hardly faced any serious problem of communication in *Murder in the Cathedral*. The audience for which he wrote the play constituted a sort of Church congregation, and were willing participants in a ritual : the ritual celebration of Becket's martyrdom. *The Family Reunion* however, offers an interesting example of Eliot's novel experiment in communication of religious vision to a secular audience. Indeed he has faced here the challenge of prose on its own ground—in a naturalistic setting. *The Family Reunion* makes a bold experiment in poetic naturalism with the aid of a flexible verse medium which enables the dramatist to reach the depth as well as to maintain the surface reality. Now the greatest single factor which accounts for the success of Eliot's dramatic poetry is the technique of weaving images into the texture of dramatic verse which not only intensifies, elevates and externalises the action of the play but also produces the accompanying universe of thought, which otherwise, would have been hardly communicated to the audience.

By a careful choice of imagery drawn from domestic life and contrasting them with those culled from the sphere of nature, disease and ideas, Eliot creates the two distinct levels of existence ; the temporal and spiritual, the physical and metaphysical. A subtle interplay of nature and idea images cutting across the physical and domestic images differentiates the two planes of experience which Harry Agatha on the one



hand and the rest of the characters on the other seem to comprehend.

The play opens in the realistic setting of a drawing room like any other modern drawing room comedy. The verse of the play adapts itself to the situation and almost maintains the verisimilitude of conversational idiom and speech. Hence the images that Eliot has used in this play draw themselves upon the familiar domestic milieu.

The closed world of Amy's narrow, egoistical designs which thrives on old memories, finds a fitting expression in the clock imagery :

And clocks could be trusted, tomorrow assured

And time would not stop in the dark.<sup>87</sup>

To differentiate the two distinct levels of significance represented by Agatha and the rest of the characters such as Ivy, Violet etc., Eliot chooses nature imagery to act as a foil to the domestic imagery used by the commonplace characters. To Agatha's cold philosophical statement :

Wishwood was always a cold place, Amy.<sup>88</sup>

Ivy's light hearted jargon offers a striking contrast :

I would go south in the winter, if I could afford it,

Not freeze, as I do, in Bays water, by a gas-fire counting  
shillings.<sup>89</sup>

Eliot carefully selects a few type-images to individualise the different characters of the play. Amy who, neither belongs to the commonplace level of experience nor to the spiritual plane lives in a make-believe world of fancy, often indulging in abstract, vague and illusive ideas. Hence, Amy's thoughts are often couched in idea-images. For instance :

And death will come to you as a mild surprise

A momentary shudder in a vacant room !<sup>90</sup>

But Eliot sometimes allows Agatha to speak in terms of domestic imagery which attains a sort of symbolic extension of meaning :

Harry must often have remembered Wishwood—

The nursery tea, the school holiday,

The daring feats on the old pony,

And thought to creep back through the little door.<sup>91</sup>

Agatha also articulates her feelings in idea-imagery quite frequently ; but hardly does she allow them to be vague and abstract. On the other hand they open up a vista of mystical experience. Since Eliot believes in the efficacy of traditional approach to drama and works out a theory of synthesis of naturalism and formalism (adhering to the classical principles of art and bringing them to the rescue of realism), he does not alienate the sympathy of the audience by making Agatha speak in a distinct language of metaphysics. Hence, Agatha's

'utterances are interspersed with images of nature and domestic as well as idea-images. In fact, she provides the most interesting example of transmutation of commonplace experience into the metaphysical or the spiritual by means of a shift in the level of understanding through the clever intertextual turn of diverse imagery in dramatic poetry. For instance, Agatha's cold retort to Amy's conceit

Nothing has been changed. I have seen to that<sup>43</sup>

brings out her spiritual insight into Harry's predicament :

In the plantation, down the corridor

That led to the nursery, round the corner

Of the new wing, he will have to face him—

And it will not be a very 'Jolly' corner.

When the loop in time comes—and it does not come for everybody—

The hidden is revealed and the spectres

Show themselves.<sup>43</sup>

We are at once drawn to the very core of the drama—the problem of Harry's spiritual emancipation through self discovery—through an understanding of his inherited sin (or original sin). Through an almost imperceptible shift from the commonplace domestic imagery to the idea-imagery the poet playwright has brought about transmutation, rather an elevation of experience. Agatha successfully creates an atmosphere of mystery and supernatural setting by combining idea and nature imagery.

Men tighten the knot of confusion

Into perfect misunderstanding,

Reflecting a pocket torch of observation

Upon each others opacity

Neglecting all the admonitions

From the world around the corner

The winds talk in the dry Holly-tree

The inclination of the moon

The attraction of the dark passage

The paw under the door.<sup>44</sup>

In response to Agatha's philosophical statement the Chorus of the common characters makes a candid confession of their sense of bewilderment and helplessness. They draw upon the Imagery of the stage to indicate their amateurish role in life :

Why do we feel embarrassed, impatient, fretful, ill at ease

Assembled like amateur actors who have not been assigned  
their parts ?

Like amateur actors in a dream when the curtain rises, to find  
themselves dressed for a different play, or having rehearsed  
the wrong parts,

Waiting for the rustling in the stalls, the litter in the dress circle,  
the laughter and catcalls in the gallery ?<sup>45</sup>

As a marked contrast, Amy's vague, abstract images only reveal her own state of mind. When she speaks of Harry's wife, she indeed, unveils her own shadowy world :

A restless shivering painted shadow

In life she is less than a shadow in death <sup>46</sup>

Mr. Grover Smith says that "The imagery of *The Family Reunion* is designed largely to support Harry's nightmarish impressions".<sup>47</sup> Since the action of the play is centred in Harry, the playwright concentrates on imagery which throws into relief the psychopathic temperament of the protagonist and his mental anguish which gives way to a sense of resignation through enlightenment. But it would be wrong to say that the images are mostly designed here to lend support to Harry's nightmarish impressions. What in fact, the images of the play significantly help to bring out is the gradual development of Harry from a state of psychopathic fear to that of the joyful submission to the Eumenides. Indeed, this transition, constitutes the very theme of the play. To communicate this idea of spiritual transformation to the secular audience Eliot dwells upon Harry's nightmarish impressions with a view to making the idea of Original Sin (which appears to be an abnormality to the realistic people) appear tolerable on the stage.

There is another reason for concentrating on the nightmarish impression of Harry—to make the make-believe world of the stage accept the Furies as a significant part of the action and not as a mere stage decoration. The audience is called upon to look at the Furies through the eyes of Harry and to participate in the inner drama of his mind by making them share the impressions with the help of images. Hence, Eliot uses olfactory images and images of disease to drive home the abnormal state of Harry's mind. For example :

The noxious smell untraceable in the drains,  
Inaccessible to the plumbers, that has its hour of the night  
You do not know

The unspoken voice of sorrow in the ancient bedroom  
At three O'clock in the morning. I am not speaking  
Of my own experience, but trying to give you  
Impressions in a more familiar medium. I am the old house  
With the noxious smell and the sorrow before morning

In which all past is present, all degradation  
Is unredeemable.<sup>48</sup>

Perhaps a better presentation of the idea of Original Sin is possible in the realistic theatre.

Harry's sense of desolation—rather, a sense of spiritual isolation, is brought out in a beautiful image following the account of his sense of inherited sin (or Original Sin) :

The sudden solitude in a crowded desert  
In a thick smoke, many creatures moving  
Without direction<sup>49</sup>

In order to communicate to the audience of the commercial theatre the implications of the great Christian idea of the sense of sin Eliot uses the queer physical imagery :

While the slow stain sinks deeper through the skin  
Painting the flesh and discolouring the bone—  
This is what matters but it is unspeakable,  
Untranslatable. I talk in general terms  
Because the particular has no language.<sup>50</sup>

Even the primitive wheel imagery which speaks of suffering as the pattern of life (very much a Buddhist concept) is used by Harry to drive home his idea of the sense of sin :

For a momentary rest on the burning wheel  
The cloudless night in the mid-Atlantic  
When I pushed her over.<sup>51</sup>

The psychopathic temperament of Harry which provides a releasing mechanism for his horror or the sense of Original Sin is undoubtedly an effective objective correlative for the emotion concerned.

It expresses itself again and again in the imagery of disease :

It goes a good deal deeper  
Than what people call their conscience, it is just the cancer  
That eats away the self.  
The contamination has reached the marrow  
And they are always near.<sup>52</sup>

Thus an identification of the sense of sin (represented by the imagery of disease) with the Furies offers a new realistic explanation for the religious emotion which makes the play conform to the requirements of the realistic theatre. The psychological fear of Harry of which the Furies were an emotional equivalent, is overcome by him as he dimly understands his own share of the responsibility, of the inherent evil. This is rendered in a beautiful idea-image.

I think I see what you mean

Dimly—as you once explained the sobbing in the Chimney

The evil in the dark closet, which they said was not there.<sup>53</sup>

The meeting between Harry and Mary which takes place in Part I scene 2 is quite significant in respect of Harry's understanding of the futility of having anything to do with Mary. In this scene, images drawn from nature, from the associations of the spring, open up a new landscape of possibilities of Harry's rebirth through an other-worldly vision. The most revealing account of Harry's otherworldly vision is provided by a complex image drawn from nature which creates a supernatural and mystic association even in the cosy drawing room setting :

The most real is what I fear. The bright colour fades

The glow upon the world that never found its object

Where the dead stone is seen to be batrachian

The aphyllous branch ophidian.<sup>54</sup>

Since Mary tries to persuade Harry to change his mind towards Wishwood by asking him to be patient with her so that he might set up a normal human relationship with her (indeed to dissuade him from his quest for spiritual liberation), Harry points out the relative insignificance of her presence in his life. For this he takes the help of nature-imagery which ably demonstrates his attitude to Mary,

Yet you seem

Like some one who comes from a very long distance,

Or the distant waterfall in the forest,

Inaccessible, half heard.

And I hear your voice as in the silence

Between two storms, one hears the moderate usual noises

In the grass and leaves of life persisting

Which ordinarily pass unnoticed.<sup>55</sup>

The suppressed agony of Mary's yearning heart finds expression in nature-imagery. Eliot evinces great skill in weaving a pattern of images which throw into relief the passionate intensity of a woman's unfulfilled desires :

The cold spring now is the time

For the ache in the moving root

The agony in the dark

The slow flow throbbing the trunk

The pain of the breaking bud

These are the ones that suffer least :

The aconite under the snow

And the snowdrop crying for a moment in the wood<sup>56</sup>

But Harry's account of the spring at once reveals his religious temperament :

Spring is an issue of blood  
A season of sacrifice  
And the wail of the new full tide  
Returning the ghosts of the drowned  
Return to land in the spring ?<sup>57</sup>

It seems that the knowledge of the mysterious process of birth, death and resurrection in nature (illustrated by the changes of seasons) dawns upon Mary although she is not aware of its religious import :

I believe the season of birth  
Is the season of sacrifice  
For the tree and the beast, and the fish  
Thrashing itself upstream :  
And what of the terrified spirit  
Compelled to be reborn  
To rise toward the violent sun  
Wet wings into the rain cloud  
Harefoot over the moon ?<sup>58</sup>

Even to the audience of the realistic theatre this sensuous, though symbolic language (which consists of a set of images drawn from nature) conveys a sense of awe and mystery. By a clever selection of domestic imagery Eliot attains a symbolic extension of meaning in Harry's utterance to Mary :

You bring me news  
Of a door that opens at the end of a corridor,  
Sunlight and singing ;<sup>59</sup>

Harry's nightmarish experience of witnessing the sudden appearance of the Furies in the presence of Mary proves to be a difficult theme for communication in the realistic theatre. Nevertheless, through a careful choice of olfactory imagery which symbolises a spiritual apprehension the poet-playwright drives home the idea of Harry's sense of sin.

That apprehension deeper than all sense,  
Deeper than the sense of smell, but like a smell,  
In that it is indescribable a sweet and bitter smell  
From another world. I know it, I know it :  
More potent than ever before, a vapour dissolving  
All, other worlds, and me into it. O Mary  
Don't look at me like that !<sup>60</sup>

The horrifying sense of guilt that haunts Harry at the appearance of the Furies is rendered in effective animal imagery :

They are roused again, the sleepless hunters  
 That will not let me sleep. At the moment before sleep  
 I always see their claws distended  
 Quietly, as if they had never stirred.<sup>61</sup>  
 ...let your necrophily  
 Feed upon that carcase.<sup>62</sup>

The animal imagery, undoubtedly throws, into relief a strong sense of guilt and desperation. In fact, with the appearance of the Furies Harry's quest for liberation (or martyrdom) truly begins.

Eliot makes an effective use of the imagery of disease in Part I scene 3 in which Harry's sense of guilt is identified with the uncanny disease cancer. Dr. Warburton the family physician provides the proper background or the rationale for such an association. Beyond doubt, the dramatist, through such a device, successfully communicates Harry's sense of sin to the audience of the commercial theatre :

For Instance :

...Cancer is here ;  
 The lump, the pain, the occasional sickness  
 Murder a reversal of sleep and waking.<sup>63</sup>

A sense of mystery or supernatural association that hangs over Harry's sense of guilt is skilfully suggested by the Chorus towards the close of this scene :

And the past is about to happen, and the future was long since  
 settled  
 And the wings of the future darken the past, the beak and claws  
 have desecrated  
 History. Shamed  
 The first cry in the bedroom, the noise in the nursery, mutilated  
 The family album, rendered ludicrous  
 The tenant's dinner, the family picnic on the moors. Have torn  
 The roof from the house, or perhaps it was never there  
 And the bird sits on the broken chimney. I am afraid.<sup>64</sup>

The bird-imagery combined with domestic imagery opens up a vast landscape of time caught in the mysterious process of creation in which the human history brings the elemental horror of sinfulness.

This atmosphere of mystery is intensified by Agatha's solemn chant at the close of the scene. A complex imagery constituted of nature and idea-images produces almost the effect of a primitive charm in Agatha's statement :

May the knot that was tied  
 Become unknotted

May the crossed bones  
In the filled-up well  
Be at last straightened  
May the weasel and the otter  
Be about their proper business  
The eye of the day time  
And the eye of the night time  
Be diverted from this house  
Till the knot is unknotted  
The crossed is uncrossed  
And the crooked is made straight.<sup>65</sup>

Sometimes with the help of images Eliot is able to reveal the inmost recesses of the mind of a character. A single image, for instance throws the character of Amy into relief. Dr. Warburton describes Amy as a machine :

The whole machine is weak  
And running down.<sup>66</sup>

In his sincere effort to stir up sympathy in Harry's mind for the sake of his mother, Dr. Warburton is able to give us a neat picture of the mechanical life of Amy which likes to deny the normal course of change. Again Harry's psychopathic-cum-religious temperament is summed up in an idea-imagery :

I was like that in a way, so long as I could think  
Even, of my own life as an isolated ruin.  
A casual bit of waste in an orderly universe.  
But It begins to seem just part of some fuge disaster,  
Some monstrous mistake and aberration  
Of all men, of the world, which I can not put in order.<sup>67</sup>

In Part I, scene I the Chorus of ordinary characters concludes the scene with a few domestic images.

The images are mostly repetitious as they seem to echo the Chorus's earlier reflections on the interaction of past, present and future in the vast expanse of time. Nevertheless, there is a subtle sense of contrast between the trivial everyday life and the serious implications of tradition the Chorus refers to. This obviously differentiates the levels of experience or significance in the play :

And whatever happenes began in the past and presses hard on  
the future  
The agony in the curtained bedroom whether of birth or of dying  
Gathers into itself all the voices of the past, and projects them  
into the future.



The treble voices on the lawn  
 The moing of hay in sumer  
 The dogs and the old pony  
 The stumble and the wail of little pain  
 The chopping of wood in autumn  
 And the singing in the kitchen  
 And the steps at night in the corridor  
 The moment of sudden loathing  
 And the season of stifled sorrow  
 The whisper, the transparent deception  
 The keeping up off appearances  
 The making the best of a bad job  
 All twined and tangled together, all are recorded.<sup>68</sup>

An interesting amalgam of domestic, nature and idea-images conveys the predominant sense of irony in life.

The most significant scene of *The Family Reunion* (Part II scene 2) is close-packed with images which compress a number of details relating to the emotional experience of Agatha and illuminate the spiritual significance of Harry's self discovery (through an understanding of his relationship with Agatha). An image of light provides the audience with the emotional background of Agatha's spiritual experience—with an account of the moment of revelation :

There are hours when there seems to be no past or future  
 Only a present moment of pointed light  
 When you want to burn. When you stretch out your hand  
 To the flames. They only come once,  
 Thank God, that Kind. Perhaps there is another Kind,  
 I believe, across a whole Thibet of broken stones  
 That lie, fang up, a lifetime's march.<sup>69</sup>  
 Again, how suggestive is the idea-imagery through which  
 Agatha communicates his sense of spiritual kinship with  
 Harry I  
 If that happened, I knew I should have carried  
 Death in life, death through lifetime, death in my womb  
 I felt that you were in some way mine.<sup>70</sup>

The moment Harry discovers in Agatha his spiritual mother his uneasiness about his sense of guilt disappears and gives way to self assurance. This is brought out in a neat idea-image :

Perhaps my life has only been a dream  
 Dreamt through me by the minds of others. Perhaps  
 I only dreamt I pushed her.<sup>71</sup>

Eliot is greatly successful in communicating the religious import of the play in Agatha's statement to Harry in which she urges upon Harry to recognise in himself the prospective martyr of his own family in a series of bird and idea-imagery. In fact, the significance of Harry's ordeal is suggested in the bird-imagery.

It is possible that sin may strain and struggle  
In its dark instinctive birth to come to consciousness  
And so find expurgation. It is possible  
You are the consciousness of your unhappy family,  
It's bird sent flying through the purgatorial flame  
Indeed it is possible you may learn hereafter,  
Moving alone through flames of ice, chosen  
To resolve the enchantment under which we suffer.<sup>72</sup>

Since all this spiritual talk between Harry and Agatha might prove to be a strain on the nerves of the audience Eliot sometimes makes Agatha speak in less obtrusive imagery. To relieve the audience of the commercial theatre of any such strain he falls back upon commercial and domestic imagery. For instance :

I had been living all these years upon my capital,  
Instead of earning my spiritual income daily.<sup>73</sup>

To provide the audience of the realistic theatre with a penetrating insight into the character and feelings of Harry, into the subterranean agony of his mind, Eliot has recourse to shadow-imagery :

Now I see

I have been wounded in a war of phantoms  
Not by human beings—they have no more power than I  
The things I thought were real are shadows, and the real  
Are what I thought were private shadows.<sup>74</sup>

Now along with this shadow-imagery comes in mixed imagery drawn from nature, bird and domestic setting, which produce an effect of weird supernatural setting. In order to establish 'The primacy of the supernatural over the natural life'<sup>75</sup> which Eliot considers to be 'our primary concern' the dramatist has taken care to see that the images reflect the idea "that religious emotions must be a kind of extension and sanctification of the domestic and social emotions"<sup>75a</sup>.

When the sun was shining on the rose-garden :  
And heard in the distance tiny voices  
And then I was only my own feet walking  
Away, down a concrete corridor  
In a dead air. Only feet walking  
And sharp heel scraping. Over and under

Echo and noise of feet  
 I was only the feet, and the eye  
 Seeing the feet : the unwinking eye  
 Fixing the movement. Over and under<sup>76</sup>

The above speech of Agatha helps to create a supernatural atmosphere even in the realistic setting. Harry helps to intensify the atmosphere with a complex image drawn from body and nature :

In and out in an endless drift  
 Of shrieking forms in a circular desert  
 Weaving with contagion of putrescent embraces  
 On dissolving bone. In and out the movement  
 Until the chain broke and I was left  
 Under the single eye above the desert.<sup>77</sup>

Harry and Agatha alternately use compound imagery drawn from human body, nature and shadow to intensify the supernatural atmosphere created in the play. Agatha uses hospital imagery to suggest the idea that there is room for recovery from the spiritual malaise.

As Harry narrates his mystical journey—the spiritual pilgrimage to the land of the heart's desire in which he comes to have communion with his spiritual mother, Agatha, he makes use of elemental nature and primitive animal imagery :

To and fro, dragging my feet  
 Among inner shadows in the smoky wilderness,  
 Trying to avoid the clasping branches  
 And the giant lizard. To and fro.  
 Until the chain breaks.

The chain breaks,  
 The wheel stops, and the noise of machinery  
 And the desert is cleared, under the judicial sun  
 Of the final eye, and the awful evacuation  
 Cleanses.

\* \* \*

O my dear you walked through the little door  
 And I ran to meet you in the rose garden.<sup>78</sup>

Harry feels immediately 'after his communion with his spiritual mother, a sense of liberation. He becomes apprehensive of the presence of the Furies as Eumenides—as good angels bearing the message of his freedom. Hence a sense of expectation and suspense fill the mind of Harry.

Eliot presents a vivid picture of this state of Harry's mind with aesthetic imagery which is concerned with imaginary seeing :

Do you feel a kind of stirring underneath the air ?  
Do you ? don't you ? a communication, a scent  
Direct to the brain.. but not just as before,  
Not quite like, not the same...<sup>79</sup>

As the Eumenides appear in the empty embrasure and Agatha in a somnabular fashion replaces them she utters almost a sort of chant in which she has resort to nature imagery which symbolizes a metaphysical idea :

In an accidental bed  
Or under an elder tree  
According to the phase  
Of the determined moon  
A curse is like a child, formed  
To grow to maturity :  
Accident is design  
And design is accident  
In a cloud of unknowing.  
O my child, my curse,  
You shall be fulfilled :  
The knot shall be unknotted  
And the crooked made straight.<sup>80</sup>

Harry's concluding speech in *The Family Reunion* is interspersed with nature and idea-images. In fact the protagonist is here able to create a metaphysical and supernatural atmosphere with the aid of these images.

To the worship in the desert, the thirst and deprivation,  
A stony sanctuary and a primitive altar,  
The heat of the sun and the icy vigil  
A care over lives of humble people,  
The lesson of ignorance of incurable diseases.  
Such things are possible. It is love and terror  
Of what waits and wants me, and will not let me fall.<sup>81</sup>

The gradual transmutation of Harry's personal fear or guilt consciousness into the spiritual feeling of renunciation at the instance of the supernatural forces is carefully traced through the intelligent association of images. What was formerly a nightmarish experience to Harry, now with his self-discovery comes to be the source of spiritual inspiration.

In the concluding scene of the play Eliot has resort to domestic imagery to describe the uneasy relationship between Amy and her husband :

What of humiliation,  
Of the chilly pretences in the silent bedroom,

Forcing sons upon an unwilling father ?<sup>82</sup>

Out of her sense of desperation and feeling of loneliness Amy breaks out into a pitiful cry. But she chooses to express her feelings in a domestic and household Imagery :

An old woman alone in a damned house.  
I will let the walls crumble. Why should I worry  
To keep the flies on the roof combat the endless weather,  
Resist the wind ? fight with increasing taxes  
And unpaid rents and tithes ? nourish investments  
With wakeful nights and patient calculations  
With the solicitor, the broker agent ?<sup>83</sup>

Since Amy lives in the closed world of her narrow domestic sphere, her statements in the last scene mostly confessional, are couched in familiar domestic Imagery.

But Agatha's prophetic statements are, in contrast with those of Amy's, presented in spherical and geographical images :

Harry has crossed the frontier  
Beyond which safety and danger have a different meaning.<sup>84</sup>

Or

You and,  
My dear, may very meet again  
In our wanderings in the neutral territory  
Between two worlds.<sup>85</sup>

In the interesting dialogue between Agatha and Mary which comes at the end of the play, an intertexture of domestic and nature imagery opens up before our eyes a weird mystical world. In fact, the final prayer of Agatha has something of the ritual incantation about it and holds the audience rapt under the spell of a primitive charm. This, beyond doubt, illustrates Eliot's art of transfiguring the commonplace reality with the help of an intertexture of imagery in poetry.

#### IV

Unlike *Murder in the Cathedral* and *The Family Reunion*, *The Cocktail Party* is very much sparse of images (they occur in situations which call for a symbolic extension of meaning or differentiation of levels of experience). Reilly and Julia two significant characters of the play, who constitute a sort of spiritual brotherhood (rather, a Christian association) frequently use images to articulate their feelings. In fact, the significance of their utterances, and the elevation of their experiences are manifest in the rich array of images in which they choose to express their ideas. Compared to their language, the

speeches of other characters become conspicuous by the absence or paucity of such images. Thus a differentiation of levels of experience is attained with the introduction of such images as bring out the moments of intense experience.

The general pattern of the images used in this play is, as in other plays, an intertexture of domestic and idea-images interspersed with nature images. Animal images occur in situations which are devised to throw into relief the commonplace and vulgar attitude to life (or even bestiality) which stands in contrast with the religious attitude (or spirituality) of the initiated characters (rather, the Christian characters) of the play. Since it is, in a way, a play of Christian conversion addressed to the Broadway people Eliot takes every possible precaution to space the images at proper places in the drama. Commenting on the scheme of images in a typical passage of the play, Denis Donoghue broadly classifies the imagery into two groups : domestic or Christian : He says :

The Christian images arise naturally from the situation ; The domestic details are so authentic that they support the Christian references without strain. It is easy to understand therefore, why a secular or neutral audience would accept such a passage, complete with its Christian terms.<sup>86</sup>

This account of Eliot's imagery (in Act I scene 2) holds good of the entire scheme of images in the play. Denis Donoghue further elaborates on the structural pattern of images when he points out that "Eliot's basic procedure is one by which neutral images are exposed to the danger of picking up a specifically Christian infection."<sup>87</sup>

William Arrowsmith says that the main images of *The Cocktail Party* are broadly those involving sight and blindness, light and darkness. In support of this contention, he refers to such passages as Julia's "I must have left my glasses here And I simply can't see a thing without them", or Celia's "I can see you at last as a human being", and Reilly's "And me bein' the One-Eyed Riley" etc.

Denis Donoghue considers this imagery of vision as a very important feature of Eliot's new technique of developing the theme of spiritual progress.

But both Arrowsmith and Donoghue fail to take into account Eliot's art of differentiating the various levels of experience by which he is able to create a sort of congenial atmosphere for willing suspension of disbelief. Eliot relies on the evocative power of images which transmutes the everyday world of reality into a weird, uncanny world of experience. This is ably demonstrated in the opening scene of the play. The familiar drawing room setting of the Chamberlaynes' London flat puts on an a

rather different look as the audience listens to the Unidentified Guest who chooses to express his sense of apprehension of the unforeseen events forcing upon men, in an idea-image which is suggestive of the supernatural influence to which our everyday life is at times liable to be exposed :

Let me, therefore, remain the stranger.  
But let me tell you, that to approach the stranger  
Is to invite the unexpected, release a new force  
Or let the genie out of the bottle.  
It is to start a train of events  
Beyond your control.<sup>88</sup>

The same idea occurs in another passage of the play in which the Unidentified Guest tries to acquaint Edward with our passive role in life :

When you've dressed for a party  
And are going downstairs, with everything about you  
Arranged to support you in the role you have chosen,  
Then sometimes, when you come to the bottom step  
There is one step more than your feet expected  
And you come down with a jolt. Just for a moment  
You have the experience of being an object  
At the mercy of a malevolent staircase  
In going to bed in the nursing home,  
In talking to the matron, you are still the subject,  
The centre of reality, But stretched on the table,  
You are a piece of furniture in a repair shop  
For all those who surround you the masked actors.<sup>89</sup>

Apparently the staircase imagery (rather the domestic imagery) and the hospital imagery (the most favourite imagery of T. S. Eliot) throw into relief man's passive role in life in the presence of some unpredictable forces. Such a concept is bound to prepare the audience for the spiritual progression in the action of the play. In fact, the Unidentified Guest speaks of the importance of spiritual knowledge in an idea image :

Most of the time we take ourselves for granted,  
As we have to, and live on a little knowledge,  
About ourselves as we were, who are you now ?  
You don't know any more than I do,  
But rather less. You are nothing but a set  
Of obsolete responses. The one nothing to do  
Is to do nothing "Wait".<sup>90</sup>

In the second scene of Act I of *The Cocktail Party* Eliot makes an effective use of the idea imagery to reveal Edward's instinct for abstract

thinking, his awareness of his own mediocrity and of the metaphysical influence on his life :

Only the happiness of knowing  
That the misery does not feed on the ruins of loveliness,  
That the tedium is not the residue of ecstasy.  
I see that my life was determined long ago  
And that the struggle to escape from it  
Is only a make believe, a pretence  
That what is, is not, or could be changed.<sup>91</sup>

In direct contrast with this imagery comes the animal imagery in the speech of Celia which aims at reducing Edward's portrait into one of wretchedness (or bestiality).

What I heard was only the noise of an insect  
Cry, endless, meaningless, inhuman—  
You might have made it by scraping your legs together—  
Or however grasshoppers do it. I looked,  
And listened for your heart, your blood,  
And saw only a beetle the size of a man  
With nothing more inside it than what comes out  
When you tread on a beetle.<sup>92</sup>

In a striking imagery of violence in Act I scene 3, the Unidentified Guest, in fact, tells Edward not to indulge in animal fury when Lavinia is restored to him : "Don't strangle each other with knotted memories"<sup>93</sup>

Though Eliot makes use of the machine imagery in the same scene to reveal Lavinia's acceptance of the supernatural influence :

I don't know why. But it seems to me that yesterday  
I started some machine, that goes on working,  
And I can't stop it ; no, it's not like a machine  
Or if it's a machine, someone else is running it.  
But who ? somebody is always interfering...  
I don't feel free...and yet I started it...<sup>94</sup>

he is back again with the animal imagery to bring to light the element of bestiality that stands in the way of any true understanding between the husband and the wife :

So here we are again. Back in the trap,  
With only one difference, perhaps—we can fight each other,  
Instead of each taking his corner of the cage.<sup>95</sup>

The uneasy human relationship between Edward and Lavinia throws into relief the futility of narrow domestic life which is circumscribed by bestiality. In an intertexture of domestic and animal images Edward's speech pinpoints the evil of the gross ego-centric life which deprives



men of happiness :

What devil left the door on the latch  
For these doubts to enter ? And then you came back, you  
The angel of destruction—just as I felt sure.  
In a moment, at your touch, there is nothing but ruin.  
O God, what have I done ? The python. The Octopus.<sup>96</sup>

Earlier in the play with the help of prison imagery Eliot drives home the idea that Hell is nothing short of one's narrow self.

In Act II the moral crisis of Celia is vividly brought out in the idea imagery that describes the ecstasy of one without desire, and her spiritual anguish :

I have thought at moments that the ecstasy is real  
Although those who experience it may have no reality  
For what happened is remembered like a dream  
In which one is exalted by intensity of loving  
In the spirit, a vibration of delight  
Without desire, for desire is fulfilled  
In the delight of loving. A state one does not know  
When awake. But what, or whom I loved,  
Or what in me was loving, I do not know  
And if that is all meaningless, I want to be cured  
Of a craving for something I cannot find  
And the shame of never finding it.<sup>97</sup>

But to keep the audience informed of the background to this spiritual yearning Reilly described in domestic imagery the horror of everyday life :

They do not repine ;  
Are contented with the morning that separates  
And with the evening that brings together  
For casual talk before the fire  
Two people who know they do not understand each other,  
Breeding children whom they do not understand  
And who will never understand them.<sup>98</sup>

Reilly employs idea imagery to describe the twofold ways of living he prescribes to his patients :

Each way means loneliness—and communion.  
Both ways avoid the final desolation  
Of solitude in the phantasmal world  
Of imagination shuffling memories and desires.<sup>99</sup>

The importance of understanding in life, which is the very basis of family happiness is held by Reilly to be the basis of any spiritual adventure :

To the stale food mouldering in the larder,

The stale thoughts mouldering in their mind,  
 Each unable to disguise his own meanness  
 From himself, because it is known to the other.  
 It's not knowledge of the mutual treachery  
 But the knowledge that the other understands the motive

: Mirror to mirror, reflecting vanity.<sup>100</sup>

Since Lavinia and Edward make a clean breast of their failings to the psychiatrist, Julia tells Reilly that they should take some sort of risk to help them to a new beginning. In this context, she uses dress imagery to communicate her feelings :

All we could do was to give them the chance  
 And now, when they are stripped naked to their souls  
 And can choose, whether to put on proper costumes  
 Or huddle quickly into new disguises  
 They have, for the first time, somewhere to start from.<sup>101</sup>

But to communicate her feelings about Celia and her sense of apprehension about her spiritual pilgrimage Julia has recourse to complex nature and idea imagery :

She will pass between the scolding hills  
 Through the valley of derision, like a child sent on an errand  
 In eagerness and patience.<sup>102</sup>

With the ritual incantation of the libation ceremony (that takes place in the psychiatrist's consulting room in London) in which Julia, Alex and Reilly join in a Chorus a supernatural atmosphere is slowly induced into the play. Here nature imagery predominates and intensifies the feeling of other apprehension :

Reilly	Let them build the hearth Under the protection of the stars
Alex.	Let them place a chair each side of it.
Julia	May the holy ones watch over the roof May the moon herself influence the bed (they drink)
Alex	The words for those who go upon a journey
Reilly	Protector of travellers Bless the Road.
Alex	Watch over her in the desert Watch over her in the mountain Watch over her in the labyrinth Watch over her by the quicksand.
Julia	Protect her from the voices Protect her from the visions Protect her in the tumult

Protect her in the silence.<sup>103</sup>

Perhaps the most suggestive picture of Celia haunted by the supernatural forces is offered by Reilly towards the end of the play in a neat image :

When I first met Miss Coplestone, in this room,  
I saw the image, standing behind her chair,  
Of a Celia Coplestone whose face showed the astonishment  
Of the first five minutes after a violent death.<sup>104</sup>

But Eliot has missed no opportunity to rationalize this experience for the realistic theatre by offering indirectly an apology for his individual mode of presentation :

If this strains your credulity, Mrs. Chamberlayne,  
I ask you only to entertain the suggestion  
That a sudden intuition, in certain minds,  
May tend to express itself at once in a picture.<sup>105</sup>

That in a way is the key to Eliot's art of presentation of the religious emotion (or the supernatural elements) in the realistic theatre by means of images.

## V

In his eagerness to bring the verse medium of his plays close to the idiom of everyday speech, Eliot has scrupulously avoided the use of imagery in *The Confidential Clerk*. Save for a few images (not exceeding even a dozen) the play is almost devoid of imagery. Nevertheless, even in the limited context, the recurring imagery in the drama which is drawn from garden or nature, is highly significant.

The garden-imagery is by far the most significant imagery in Eliot's drama. To him, the garden is the symbol of the old-world bliss or ecstasy of which we have only occasional glimpses. As a matter of fact Eliot's garden-imagery is a reminder of the great Biblical episode of Adam and Eve's banishment from the garden of Eden. What Eliot's garden-imagery suggests is that the lost world of innocence, now denied to men, can be only an esoteric experience to those who want to retreat occasionally into the land of the heart's desire. But that ideal land—the land of wish fulfilment can be experienced in the work-a-day world by such sincere souls (or Christians) as Eggerson whose garden meets the requirements of both the worlds—the ideal as well as the real. Hence, Colby speaks approvingly of Eggersons' garden.

Well, he retires to his garden-literally,  
And also in the same sense that I retire to mine.  
But he doesn't fell alone there. And when he comes out

He has marrows, or beetroot, or peas...for Mrs. Eggerson.<sup>106</sup>

Of Eliot's use of garden-imagery in this play and elsewhere, Carol Smith offers an interesting account :

"Eliot used the image of the garden to represent the escape into ecstasy as early as the "hyacinth girl" passage in *The Waste Land* and later in "Ash Wednesday" and "Burnt Norton. It also appears in Harry's rose-garden in *The Family Reunion* and in the magic forest where Celia seeks a lost treasure in *The Cocktail Party*. In Eliot's Latest play, *The Eder Statesman*, the setting for Lord Claverton's mastery of the past through love is the sanatorium's garden of memory. In Eliot's early uses of this image his emphasis was on the transitory and even illusory fleeting and dim quality of remembered bliss, and he frequently portrayed the experience of ecstasy in sexual terms. This, the poet implied, was all that humanity had salvaged from the 'Original Garden' of Eden where physical love and spiritual love were not separated and sexual and religious fertility were one. It is indicative of a significant change in Eliot's view of religious experience that whereas earlier the garden of remembered bliss was opposed to the experience of everyday living, in *The Confidential Clerk* the earlier secret rose garden is rejected by Colby in favour of the totality of Eggerson's garden, where God walks among the vegetables. The rose has become "marrows, or beetroot, or peas" and, while less exotic, the products of the new garden are more useful in satisfying the needs of everyday existence. In *The Confidential Clerk* the garden image is also used to differentiate those characters who can discover a sense of selfhood which will allow an integration of religious and secular experience from those characters who cannot. B. Kaghan and Lucasta have no private gardens and must depend on others to give them their roles in life. Sir Claude and Lady Elizabeth possess private gardens in which they can escape from the rest of their existence in order to find a temporary order and meaning. Only Eggerson has a garden which satisfies the needs of both realms simultaneously."<sup>107</sup>

The shift from the earlier rose-garden image to the image drawn from the vegetable garden, (as pointed out by Carol Smith) undoubtedly, bears out the transition in the religious attitude of T.S. Eliot, so far as the problem of communication is concerned. In order to approximate the world of reality to that of the religious experience Eliot upholds the notion of a totality of experience which integrates the secular into the religious. Hence, Colby speaks of the unreality of his twofold existence : of the one in the garden and the other outside it.

What I mean is, my garden is no less unreal to me

Then the world outside it. If you have two lives  
Which have nothing whatever to do with each other—  
Well, they're both unreal. But for Eggerson  
His garden is part of one single world.<sup>108</sup>

When Lucasta seeks clarification on the issue, Colby Straight forwardly says that the true religious experience will have made the secular life all the more acceptable to him :

If I were religious, God would walk in my garden  
And that would make the world outside it real  
And acceptable, I think.<sup>109</sup>

What, in fact, Eliot's garden-imagery suggests or even actualizes is that "religion must be primarily a matter of behaviour and habit, must be integrated with its social life....."<sup>110</sup> Though only sparingly used this garden-imagery (i.e. Eggerson's garden) proves to be an effective dramatic device for making the religious experience acceptable to the secular or the commercial theatre.

## VI

In his final bid to woo the audience of the commercial theatre Eliot comes to be very much preoccupied with the problem of maintaining the verisimilitude of realistic plays in the surface action of his last plays, in which the verse-medium closely follows the idiom of everyday speech. Consequently, the formal beauty of imagery comes to be very much conspicuous by its sparseness in the dramatic poetry of the present play. Nevertheless, Eliot exploits the resources of Imagery in unfolding the theme and characterization of the play, which, within its narrow compass of the restricted use of images caters to the demand of the naturalistic theatre. The most significant image of the play is drawn from the mirror, which, the dramatist suitably employs to recall the associations of Lord Claverton's shady past. In fact, Frederico Gomez, an old associate of Lord Claverton's buried past projects the cross-currents of his inner thoughts in the mirror imagery :—

The worst kind of failure, In my opinion,  
Is the man who has to keep on pretending to himself  
That he's a success—the man who in the morning  
Has to make up his face before he looks in the mirror<sup>111</sup>

Again : You'll be afraid of whispers,  
The reflection in the mirror of the face behind you,  
The ambiguous smile, the distant salutation,  
The sudden silence when you enter the smoking room.<sup>112</sup>

*To be continued.*

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# SHAKESPEARE IN 18TH CENTURY GERMANY

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PRANAB GHOSH

In order to understand the position of Shakespeare in 18th century Germany we are to go back a little in the previous century i. e. the Baroque age. The most famous dramatist of this age was Andreas Gryphius (1616—1664) whose fame as a lyricist had crossed the boundaries of Germany.

As a young man he experienced the horrors of the Thirty Years' War (1618—1648) which devastated Germany to such an extent that its population diminished from sixteen or seventeen millions to four millions. Gryphius had a wide and comprehensive education. He travelled through France, Holland and Italy and thereby came to know Western Europe. The six years which he had spent in Holland had made a man and poet of him. Here he was acquainted with the Renaissance poet and dramatist Joost Van den Vondel (died in 1679). Gryphius was deeply influenced by Shakespeare, by this Dutch dramatist, by Jesuit drama and by Seneca.

The horrors of the war left its traces on all his creative activities. The tragic undertone of his poetry showed itself in a dark affliction; life was to him a passing away, a gloomy existence and a premonition of death hovers over his best songs, odes and sonnets.

The dramas of Gryphius also have a playroom between heaven and earth. For the dialogue of his political-historical-tragedy he selected the Alexandrine, the verse of the French classical tragedy whose predominance in German literature could be found till the middle of the eighteenth century. *Leo Arminius Carolus Stuardus*, *Cardenio and Celinde*, *Catherina Van Georgien* and *Herr Peter Squentz* are some of his best known dramas. According to the example of the French classical drama he tried to preserve wherever possible the Three Unities.

In all, Gryphius wrote about fourteen dramatic works, which were in his time nothing more than dramas-to-be-read (*Lesedramen*). For only a few pieces were actually staged by students and his admirers. It is in the comedies that he sometimes gave evidences of Shakespearean art.

In his comparative study, *Shakespeare and Andreas Gryph* (1741) Johann Elias Schlegel praised this German dramatist as a great poet but

at the same time censured his crude way of writing, his word connections and the artistic effects which could be noticed only occasionally. One will not totally agree with what Schlegel wrote, but the fact remains that the influence of Shakespeare on German dramatists of no less standing than Gryphius could be noticed even in the Baroque age.

The man who predominated the German literary world till the middle of the 18th century was *Johann Christoph Gottsched* (1700—1766). He was born near Königsberg; in 1730 he became a teacher in Philosophy and Poesy and in 1734 was designated as Professor in Logic and Metaphysics. As an ardent follower of Wolffian Enlightenment Philosophy he attacked Baroque pompousness and recommended the poet to imitate the writers of classical antiquity, as it survived in the classical French literature. In many respects he followed the French poet and critic *Micalas Boileau* (1636—1711), the "Legislator of Parnassus", who was also the self-appointed codifier of the literary rules and practices of the Golden Age of French Classical literature (1680—85). Following the poetics of Boileau, Gottsched in his *Versuch Einer Kritischen Dichtkunst* (1730) set down the principles of a new rational poetry; its duty is to teach, to educate, to provide virtuous thoughts and to describe nature; its strong regularity admits of no phantasy and exulting feeling, its rules in particular (unity of place, time and action in drama, use of Alexandrine) are deduced from the French classical dramas, Gottsched looked upon these dramas as models which he wanted to introduce on the German stage through translations and imitations. However one may now disagree with him, one has to recognise his organising talent which was effective on two fields. He laid down rules for the cultivation of a correct, clear written German. He cleared the theatre of the Punch type of plays, of impromptu ones as well as of bloody dreadfulness. A short resume of the condition of the German stage will make the contribution of Gottsched clear.

Drama and theatre in Germany degenerated and served only as objects of enjoyment for the mob. By the end of the sixteenth century there came up a class of professional actors as English theatre troupes came to Germany and performed the dramas of Shakespeare in a very clumsy way. In the seventeenth century the German wandering troupes were formed. In the suburbs they performed in a very horrid way pieces of historical-political content, a speciality of the seventeenth and eighteenth century stage; in unmannerly intermezzos, Punch or Pickelhaering played their parts. The actors were looked down upon by the public and avoided as something disreputable.

Gottsched overcame the prejudice against the theatre in his moral

desire to improve and to teach. In reforming the stage he succeeded in removing the rough tone of the stage. In this he was supported by his wife, Mrs. Adelgrunde (born Kulmus) who translated the comedies of Moliere, and by the famous actress *Caroline Neubar*, the owner of a theatre troupe. He recovered for the stage its seriousness and honour, but in a one-sided and closely moralising art. Gottsched wanted only reason, only reflection and misjudged that the rationalism of the French classic was not just a mechanical regular movement; it was for the French the natural and unaffected expression of their being. Gottsched ruled absolutely for about two decades the German literary world till Lessing appeared.

It was Lessing who seriously propagated Shakespearean drama as the model for the German stage. With Lessing (1729-1781) the German writer became a European figure, who equally with Voltaire or Diderot, Dryden or Shaftesbury has played a part in the literary and cultural history of Europe. He led German literature out of its provincial plain over the German plateau to a European standard. With his appearance, German literature began to be interesting also for the Occident. In the history of German Enlightenment Lessing was for at least two decades the most recognised spiritual power.

The qualities of his personality help him to perform his historical mission: courage, will and understanding characterise the man and his work. Struggle is his life element. He understands literature as nothing other than "litterature engagee", not as an end in itself or *l'art pour l'art*. His will is again will for Truth; in all practicable ways he searches for it in art, philosophy and theology. His will is also the endeavour of an educator to promote the good of the human race. And for this every good means is suitable to him. The theatre, a high school for education, becomes a tribune, an auditorium to him. He modernises the old (the Virginia—destiny of *Emilia Galotti* or the Medea—tragedy of "Miss Sarah Sampson"), actualises historical events of the past (the Enlightenment idea of tolerance of *Nathan* or catches at the full human life of the present (in the comedy of *Minna Von Barnhelm*).

The contribution of Lessing to German drama was captivating in many respects. What lay before him when he set about the fretting work to become an Aristotle, i. e. the dramatic law-giver of the modern times, to some extent also Corneille-Racine-Moliere and Shakespeare of Germany? There were the models of Greek and Roman tragedy and comedy. There were the dramas of the Middle Ages. Then came the age of Shakespeare and Lope de Vega and finally the age of the great contemporaries, Voltaire and Diderot. Not all these were known to him. Of the great theatres of the Middle Ages he hardly knew anything, and Lope de Vega, Tirso de

Molina and Calderon, the spirit of the Spanish theatres remained foreign to him. It is with the French dramatists, against whom he played off Shakespeare, that his course of development as dramatist and critique lay closely tied together. With the classicists Corneille and Racine he went back to the ancients. But he saw and experienced them anew and impulsively and discovered thereby, as the result of his long standing investigation, the significance of Sophocles as a valid model of dramatic technique and of artistic criterion. Finally he went with Voltaire a long way which led to the discovery of Shakespeare.

In 1759, together with his friends Nicolai and Mendelssohn, Lessing edited *Briefe die neueste literatur betreffend*. In the famous 17th *Literaturbrief* (Feb. 16, 1759) he vehemently attacked Gottsched because he introduced a Frenchified theatre in Germany. Lessing wrote, "No one, the authors [ of another journal ] say, 'will deny that the German stage has to thank Professor Gottsched for a greater part of its initial development. I am this nobody, I deny it point-blank'. He further wrote, "And to decide the matters according to the example of the ancients, Shakespeare is a far greater tragic poet than Corneille, though Corneille knew the Ancients very well and Shakespeare scarcely at all. Corneille comes closer to them in mechanical contrivance, but Shakespeare in the essential. After Oedipus of Sophocles there is no book in the world which has more power over our passion than *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Hamlet*". Beyond this Lessing however does not give any reason for the superiority of Shakespeare's plays.

The National Theatre of Germany was founded in 1767 in Hamburg. Lessing was invited there as a dramaturgist. He continued the defence of Shakespeare in his *Hamburgische Dramaturgie* (1767—1769). This work has become a model of theatre criticism in Germany. While giving examples of French tragedy, Lessing refers to the fact that the French poetic tradition has wrongly understood its law-giver Aristotle, above all in his law of the Three Unities of time, place and action. Aristotle did not demand slavishly that the action of a piece has to be performed in the same place and within twenty-four hours. Fundamentally, he demanded the unity of action which is to be based on the unity of characters. The French tragedy does not offer the inner forming of action out of the characters, rather the English drama does. The genius of Shakespeare realises instinctively the true laws of poesy; his dramas would fulfil the demands of Aristotle in inspiring fear and sympathy in the sense that we also feel ourselves tied to the fate represented in the drama and through the living participation in the life of the hero we are inwardly purified.

*Johann Gottfried Herder* (1744—1803) took the cue from Lessing. Unfortunately, Herder's name is not much known in this respect. Although Lessing had drawn the attention of the Germans to Shakespeare, it was the highly gifted sensibility of Herder that made them aware of the unique creative power and greatness of Shakespeare. As it is already known, it was Herder who coined the term *volkslied* (Folk song). He differentiated between folk-poetry and literary poetry. Under literary poetry he understood those which came not from the heart but from the head at a later date when people became civilized. By folk-poetry he designated that which was a matter of the heart, full of primitive feeling, power of imagination and harmony, which blossomed at best in the early ages of the people. For deep in the soul of the folk slumber the Creative Powers, since poetic art is a gift of the folk (*voelkererbe*), not a private property of some finely built men. Under literary poetry he counted the works of Homer, the Hebraic poesy of the Bible, Ossian and the works of Shakespeare. He was considerably influenced by Percy's *Reliques* and Macpherson's *Ossian* and started collecting folk-songs of almost all the nations of Europe. He translated some of the songs of Shakespeare because he wanted to include them in his very famous book *Die stimmen der voelker in liedern*. Shakespeare as a lyric poet appealed to his mind most.

The name of Shakespeare occurs very often in the works of Herder. In one of his essays, *Von aehnlichekeiv der mittlern englischen und deutschea dichtkunst* (1777), Herder has put the question, "Why do we not have any Shakespeare and Spenser?.. I only say this much: if we had at least collected the pieces (of folk-poetry) out of which observations or usefulness of art would result—but where are they? The Englishmen—with what zeal they have collected their old songs and melodies, printed and re-printed, used and read". In another place he writes, "Our classical literature is a bird of Paradise, so coloured, so nice, so soaring, and without foothold on the German soil."

In another of his essays 'Shakespeare' (1773) he writes of a most characteristic performance, a lyrical rhapsody rather than a piece of criticism. It begins with a grand vision of Shakespeare "sitting high on the top of a rock, at his feet storm, thunder and the roaring of the sea, but his head in the rays of heaven." His aim is not to heap criticisms, "but to explain, to feel as he is..." The question of the Three Unities is then done away with by historical argument: "In Greece the drama originated as it could not originate in the North. In Greece was what cannot be in the North...Therefore the drama of Sophocles and that of Shakespeare are two things which from a certain point of view hardly have the name

in common"... "As is already known, genius is more than philosophy, and a creator is a completely different thing than an analyst : so it was a mortal endowed with divine power who produced the same effect *fear* and *sympathy* in the most different treatment....Shakespeare found no chorus, but only puppet shows and chronicle plays ! he formed out of these...the beautiful creation which stands and lives before us ! He found no simple folk character or character of the fatherland rather a multiplicity of stands, ways of living, ideas, peoples and languages...he formed stands and men, peoples and languages, kings and fools, fools and kings to a beautiful whole."

In this connection it will be interesting to note the important translations of Shakespeare's works, done in the 18th century. Christopher Martin Wieland was probably the first one who translated between 1762 and 1766 the works of Shakespeare, of which twenty two were in prose and one was in verse. It is through this translation that Herder, Goethe and Schiller read the works of Shakespeare for the first time. Herder's translation of Shakespeare's songs appeared in the third book of his monumental work on folk-song sometime in 1788/1789. Gottfried August Buerger (1747-1794), the famous writer of ballads, 'translated *Macbeth*'. It was commenced some time in 1777 at the request of the famous actor Schroeder who wanted to stage it in Hanover, but it was published in 1784. Another important translation of Shakespeare came from the hands of Eschenburg, a thorough scholar and an expert on Shakespeare. But he was too much of a scholar to be able to render in poetic German the artistic gift of Shakespeare. It is probably not known to many that Schiller also translated *Macbeth* at the turn of the century. On 14th April 1800 it was staged with great success in the Weimar Court theatre. In praise of it Koerner wrote, "Of the spirit of the original one can have no better living picture than through this translation."

Schiller and Goethe did write about Shakespeare. But that is a matter for another article.



# CROSS-CURRENTS IN FRENCH AND ENGLISH DRAMA IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

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SUDESHNA CHAKRAVARTI

The romantic movement came late to France, after England had already seen two generations of romantic poets. Victor Hugo, whose preface to *Cromwell* was considered to be the manifesto of this school, just as Gautier's preface to *Mademoiselle de Maupin* later became the manifesto of the "Art for Art's sake" movement, launched his attacks against his predecessors almost aggressively. He often evoked writers across the Channel in support of his position, and became, in his turn, the subject of admiring or sceptical English criticism.

Hugo devoted an important part of his literary criticism to English literature. He expressed his admiration for Scott, analyzing in detail many of his works. He wrote an article on Byron, on the occasion of the latter's death. He even bestowed high (and, as it seems to us, unmerited) praise on Moore's *Lalla Rookh*. To him, these writers seemed, above all, representatives of the romantic movement. One could not, Hugo stated, continue the literature of the seventeenth century in the post-Revolution era. The "classicist" critics attacked Moore simply for disregarding their arbitrary rules, but without giving concrete reasons as to why he should not have done so. If the image of classicism was the deity who serenely presided over the cosmos, Byron was like Satan who drew many stars after him, in his fall. Even the laughter of Byron, a satirist of the romantic age, differed from the laughter of Voltaire. "Voltaire had not suffered". As for Shakespeare, he had hardly any equals, except Homer and the Bible. These three marked the cultural epochs of world history. Hugo's book on Shakespeare marks a great departure from the eighteenth century French critics who could see little value in this dramatist. What was more, Hugo seemed to have used Shakespeare as a weapon in his own battle of the theatre against neo-classical norms. Everyone knows the difference between the Elizabethan "romantic" drama, with its relatively loose structure and mingling of genres and the neo-classical theatre, observing strictly the rules of unity and keeping all the physical action off-stage. Needless to say, one method could not be considered superior to another and

the fidelity to self-imposed laws did not restrain the genius of Corneille and Racine, any more than the absence of such rules lessened the Elizabethan achievement. Nevertheless, in France of the eighteenth-thirties, passions were roused to a fever point by the classic-romantic battle. When Hugo in his play, *Hernani*, almost presented a battle on the stage, thus breaking the time-honoured conventions, the "battle of *Hernani*" did not remain confined to the stage. And in all this, he considered himself a follower, though not an imitator, of the deeper values of the Shakespearean theatre. In his fight against one ancestral tradition, he tried to enlist the support of another, choosing his allies among his literary predecessors. He declared boldly that his mission was to lead the theatre (and literature in general) from artificial to "natural" emotions. Certainly, the "battle of books" was taken seriously at this period. Musset, writing in 1838, stated that classical drama had gone so much out of fashion, that its revival was greeted as a prodigy. It was on Hugo that Musset bestowed the honour of having "scaled the breach".

Perhaps it is not surprising that the young Hugo, starting his career as a dramatist, should have turned to models other than the neo-classical one. The stream of Corneille and Racine was becoming dry, Voltaire had not been their equal, and after Voltaire there was hardly any tragedy writer of note. If one is to judge by contemporary plays that Hugo himself reviewed, tragedy hardly rose above the level of pastiche. Hugo might well have thought that an alternative scheme was needed to get rid of this sterility. He maintained the Alexandrine, the traditional vehicle of French drama, especially tragedy, but defiantly disregarded the Unities and deliberately brought action on the stage, even if this was not strictly required for the purpose of the story. Whereas the neo-classical tragedy discarded all irrelevant diversions, moving with rigorous intensity and concentration and breathless speed towards the inevitable doom, Hugo followed Shakespeare in mingling graveyard scenes with jests. Thus, there are highly comic interludes in *Ruy Blas*, *Hernani* and *Cromwell* perhaps, can be enjoyed only if it is read as a comedy. Hugo attributed his own literary preferences not only to the Elizabethans but to Milton as well. In an amusing scene in *Cromwell*, Rochester tries to teach "taste" to a Milton who is something of a self-projection by Hugo. Hugo's *Esmeralda* is marked by the literary influence of Scott's *Fenella*, as well as Goethe's *Mignon*. And perhaps the *Cromwell* of Hugo, "at once regicide and king", hero and charlatan, derives some of his traits from the *Cromwell* of Scott's *Woodstock*.

Yet Hugo is not really successful as a dramatist, and his tragedies cannot be compared with those of Shakespeare, his model, or even with the plays of the other Elizabethans. They fall far short of his own novels and poetry. "Romantic" tragedy in France, though created partly under Elizabethan influence, never reached the Elizabethan heights and remained something of a tour de force. Though Hugo invoked Shakespeare to justify his innovation, the clashing swords of *Hernani* lack the dramatic reality and necessity of Shakespearean duels. The "*Cromwell*" preface argues forcefully that Shakespeare was right in mingling the grotesque with the tragic, placing the grave-diggers beside Hamlet, the apothecary beside Romeo and the witches beside Macbeth. But similar comic interludes in Hugo's drama—for instance, the drinking scene in "*Ruy Blas*", the hiding behind the cupboard in "*Hernani*"—only seem out of place and do not contribute to the tragic effect. The cloak and dagger play—some of it taken from Calderon, whom Hugo placed in the same school as Shakespeare—sometimes came close to melodrama. Certainly a dramatist was free to disregard the conventional unities of the stage, but he had to observe the intellectual unity of action—something in which Hugo did not always follow Shakespeare. When a professor, told by a student that there was more action in Hugo than in Racine, replied "more bustle", he was unjust but not wholly wrong. Swinburne, though a fervent admirer of Hugo's drama, wrote a most amusing parody of "*Marie Tudor*". In fact, though Hugo often evokes the Renaissance with its splendours and gothic horrors, it never quite comes to life in his plays. His "*Marie Tudor*" makes the reign of that fanatical queen singularly colourless, and "*Lucrezia Borgia*", despite the proliferation of poison and dagger, does not evoke the Italy of Shakespeare, Webster, Tourneur and Ford.

The question remains, how far Hugo really understood and appreciated Shakespeare and how far he merely took the latter for a symbol. Swinburne has commented on Shakespearean criticism by Hugo: "To allow that it throws more light on the greatest genius of our own century than on the greatest genius of the age of Shakespeare is not to admit that it is not rich in valuable and noble contemplations or suggestions on the immediate subject of Shakespeare's work; witness the admirably thoughtful and earnest remarks on Macbeth, the admirably passionate and pathetic reflections on Lear". Without understanding Hugo as a critic, one can assert that his criticism was to a great extent a vehicle to express his "meditations on the mission of art in the world, on the duty of human thought towards humanity..." Shakespeare was Hugo's chosen ally in his battle against the philistines of a stagnating classicism,

and also perhaps a standard to measure himself against. The Elizabethan influence came to him because he sought it, but in the vessel of French romantic drama, the old spirit took a different form.

Romantic tragedy, or "drama" of this type seldom rose above the cloak and dagger level, for few could attain the goal that Hugo himself had failed to reach. But the Romantic movement in the theatre took another turn with a dramatist like Musset. The peculiar mixture of light sentimentality, irony, low-pitched but psychologically penetrating characterization, makes his plays survive, where the heroic drama of Hugo had failed. Musset was deeply interested in the Elizabethan theatre, and in an essay on the subject, argued forcefully that the Shakespearean and neo-classical principles were not incompatible, but complementary. Each could reach greatness in its own sphere. Neither should be judged by the pastiche, or feeble imitations, which it had inspired. Here Musset seems to admit implicitly that Romantic drama on the French stage had not been too successful. A bad melodrama made by imitating Calderon and Shakespeare does not prove anything any more than a stupid tragedy following the pattern of Corneille and Racine, and, if I was asked which of the two I would tolerate more willingly, I believe I would choose the melodrama. Who will dare to say that the two names of Shakespeare and Calderon, since I am citing them, are not as glorious as those of Sophocles and Euripides. The latter have produced Racine and Corneille, the former Goethe and Schiller (Referring to the Romantic origin of German drama.) The former have placed, so to speak, their muse in the centre of a temple surrounded by a triple circle; the latter have released their genius in its flight in absolute freedom. One remarks, childhood of the art, barbarism; but have you read the works of these barbarians? "Hamlet" is worth "Orestes", "Macbeth" equals "Oedipus", and I do not even know what equals "Othello",

Among Musset's own heroes, Lorenzaccio, the tyrannicide who commits the heroic and fatal act, knowing it to be futile, resembles to some extent Brutus and Hamlet. But he is a tragic Brutus, who has lost faith in himself even before his defeat. He looks forward to the "gratuitous act" of the Gideon hero. One of the shorter plays of Musset, "The Receipt of the Devil", is based on "Wandering Willie's Tale", a short story or narrative, included in Scott's "Redgauntlet". But though the theme has been borrowed, the significance is changed almost beyond recognition. The story of Scott deals with a period of civil war in Scotland, and is marked by a vital, even harsh, humour. Musset introduces a sentimental love story, changes the shrewd and hard-headed

peasant hero into a romantic gallant, and transforms the grotesque, local superstition into Faustian magic. A hero of Musset tries to model himself on Lovelace, the fascinating, evil hero of Richardson, but turns out to be made of gentler stuff.

Perhaps as a reaction to the romantic school, a new kind of drama came into vogue in France. This was the slick, "well-made" play, with a sentimental theme, sometimes introducing the "social question". The line can be traced from Scribe, Sardou, Augier, Dumas fils to Brieux, and de Curel. The influence of this school could be felt by the new English theatre, which was casting off pseudo-romantic, pastiches and emerging into what it considered "realism". Scribe and Ibsen (interpreted by Archer) seemed to have been looked on as models in many respects. Shaw, in his prefaces, refers to this strain of French drama, and a modern literary historian has drawn a "parallel with Pinero, Somerset Maugham, Granville Barker, Galsworthy and some of the early Shaw, like Mrs. Warren's Profession". The theme of "tainted money" and the financial — moral dilemma of the hero was often a common factor.

The symbolist drama in French, though not wholly free from the old romanticism, was feeling its way towards a new dramatic technique. The "realistic", well-built plays, were being replaced by highly-charged, poetic prose, vague, poetic settings, and allegories that were never quite explained. The shadow of Maeterlinck fell on the "Celtic twilight" of the Irish Renaissance. The young Yeats was probably influenced by it. Parallels can be drawn between "The Princess Maleine"—,"Pelleas and Melirande", and "The Land of Heart's Desire" or "Countess Cathleen". Oscar Wilde's "Salome" almost certainly owes a debt to Mallarmé's Herodias and to Maeterlinckian drama. But Synge who also used poetic prose, while keeping his roots in the spoken language, categorically rejected what he considered the false prettification of the Maeterlinckian School, as well as the naturalistic stage. "In the modern literature of towns, however, richness is found only in sonnets, or prose poems, or in one or two elaborate books that are far away from the profound and common interests of life. One has, on one side, Mallarmé and Huysmans producing this literature, and on the other, Ibsen and Zola dealing with the reality of life in joyless and pallid words".

It was through a continuous process of acceptance, rejection, selection and transformation, that English and French drama cross-fertilized each other for almost a century. The breach opened—by Hernani, in the guise of a Spanish bandit, was not destined to be a fruitless sortle.

# IMAGERY IN T. S. ELIOT'S POETIC DRAMA

( Continued from previous issue )

The emptiness of Lord Claverton's private life, now devoid of love and friendship which he had once staked for the hollow public life, has been actualized in the station imagery

It's just like sitting in an empty waiting room  
In a railway station on a branch line,  
After the last train, after all the other passengers  
Have left, and the booking office is closed  
And the porters have gone. What am I waiting for  
In a cold and empty room before an empty grate?<sup>113</sup>

Of Lord Claverton's mechanical existence, there is a sly hint in Monica's express concern for his hectic life which is articulated in a machine-image :

You know I'm to protect you  
From your own restless energy-the inexhaustible  
Sources of the power that wears out the machine.<sup>114</sup>

Mrs. Carghill, one of the 'ghosts' of his buried life haunts Lord Claverton at Badgley Court to remind him of his passionate involvement with her in his youth. She likes to register her inalienable claim upon the elder statesman, who, now, wants to do away with his shady past. With the help of neat animal imagery the playwright articulates the almost awe-inspiring sense of intimacy that obtained between Lord Claverton and Mrs. Carghill

It's simply that I feel that we belong together...  
Now, don't get alarmed. But you touched my soul—  
Pawed it, perhaps, and the touch still lingers.  
And I've touched yours.<sup>115</sup>

The supreme lesson of love which the 'elder statesman' finally imbibes is presented in the play almost in the form of an apocalyptic vision. Again Charles's account of his passionate love for Monica is rendered in the familiar image of disease.

Oh my dear,  
I love you to the limits of speech, and beyond,  
Its' strange that words are so inadequate,  
Yet, like the asthmatic struggling for breath,  
So the lover must struggle for words.<sup>116</sup>

It speaks of Eliot's superb skill of weaving a pattern of images drawn from familiar sources through which he is able to communicate the theme of his religious plays to the audience of the commerce.

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2. Eliot, T. S. *Murder in the Cathedral*, Faber and Faber, London (1938) PP11-12

3. Ibid. 4. Ibid. 5. Ibid. P—13. 6. Ibid. P—15. 7. Ibid. P—13. 8. Ibid. 9. Ibid. P—17. 10. Ibid. P—18. 11. Ibid. 12. Ibid. P—20. 13. Ibid. 14. Ibid. P—21. 15. Ibid. P—23. 16. Ibid. P—24. 17. Ibid. 18. Ibid. P—26. 19. Ibid. P—29. 20. Ibid. P—30. 21. Ibid. P—34. 22. Ibid. P—35. 23. Ibid. PP. 40—41. 24. Ibid. P—43. 25. Ibid. P—45. 26. Ibid. P—54. 27. Ibid. P—60. 28. Ibid. P—61. 29. Ibid. PP 67—68. 30. Ibid. P—69. 31. Ibid. P—70.

32. Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, Act III, Scene II :

"Come, sealing night,

Scarf up the tender eye of pitiful day ;

And with thy bloody and Invisible hand

Cancel and tear to pieces that great bond

Which keeps me pale.

Good things of day begin to droop and drouse

Whiles night's black agents to their preys do rouse."

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(Concluded)

Since the Byzantine poems have a universal human interest, no reference to *A Vision*, Yeats's prose exposition of his system of philosophy, is required for their understanding, notwithstanding the fact that Yeats has here explained his view that within each man subjective and objective (or 'antithetical' and 'primary') impulses are always at war. Nevertheless, one passage in *A Vision* is perhaps too well-known to be completely ignored :

I think if I could be given a month of Antiquity and leave to spend it where I chose, I would spend it in Byzantium. . . . I think that in early Byzantium, may be never before or since in recorded history, religious, aesthetic and practical life were one, that architects and artificers...spoke to the multitude and the few alike. The painter, the mosaic worker, the worker in gold and silver, the illuminator of sacred books, were almost impersonal, almost perhaps without the consciousness of individual design, absorbed in their subject-matter and that the vision of a whole people.

(*A Vision*, London, 1937, p. 191)

It is clear from this extract that Yeats was so greatly attracted to Byzantium because he thought that the Byzantine culture or the Byzantine way of life could reconcile opposites. In Byzantium alone the life of action was not incompatible with the life of contemplation, at least so Yeats thought. Man was spared the agonizing decision, of which he tells us in 'The Choice', a poem which, significantly enough, precedes 'Byzantium' in *The Winding Stair* :

The intellect of man is forced to choose  
Perfection of the life, or of the work,  
And if it take the second must refuse  
A heavenly mansion, raging in the dark.

In the perfect life we have to renounce selfish desire and material enjoyment. That is indeed difficult. The path bristles with obstacles; it is, in the words of the *Katha Upanisad* (1.3.14), 'sharp as the edge of a razor and hard to traverse, difficult to tread'.

Why did Yeats write a second Byzantine poem? To say that a dichotomy is best expressed through a couple of poems would be to over-simplify. It would be equally naive to say that Yeats had Sturge Moore's objection in mind although we have Yeats's own testimony to that effect. (T. Sturge Moore, the artist who designed the cover of *The Tower*, pointed out that since in 'Sailing to Byzantium' the bird on the golden bough sang 'of what is past, or passing, or to come', it could not be 'out of nature', as implied in the poem). What is far more important



is the fact that the first poem is concerned chiefly with the journey to the holy city, and this is hinted in the title itself : '*Sailing to Byzantium*'. The original title, '*Towards Byzantium*', also makes this clear. The last two lines of the second stanza,

And therefore I have sailed the seas and come  
To the holy city of Byzantium,

announce the journey's end and the poet's arrival. But in the remaining two stanzas there is hardly a single word which makes us actually feel the poet's presence in Byzantium. His prayer to the 'sages standing in God's holy fire' does not have the immediacy to suggest this presence. And the little touch of 'local habitation' that we find in 'the gold mosaic of a wall' in the third stanza, or in the figure of the golden bird on the golden bough in the next, is swept away by the use of the conditional future tense in the first line of the last stanza : 'Once out of nature, I *shall* never take', etc. His grammatical form seems to have betrayed the poet. In his heart of hearts he is not yet sure about his arrival, or he does not feel at home in the place. At least, the transition is not introduced poetically in the same clear, emphatic way as is to be found in Keats's '*Ode to a Nightingale*' :

Already with thee I tender is the night,  
And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,  
Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays;  
But here there is no light,

Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown

Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

In the second poem, '*Byzantium*', Yeats speaks out as a citizen rather than an alien. He is no longer hesitant. There is not a single use of the future tense in the entire poem. This is significant. This means he is already in Byzantium, has been there for quite some time ; it also means that the tragic conflict of the first poem, which remains unresolved in the second, is not likely to be resolved in the future. '*Sailing to Byzantium*' was forward-looking. The futurity of the first line of the last stanza was re-enforced by the last words of the last line : 'or to come'. Like Yeats, we also had pinned our faith on the future. Yeats knew he would have to come back to the same theme and come back he did, but with no better results. The conflict between the flesh and the spirit remains as poignant as ever. The wheel of despair, which has started moving in '*Sailing to Byzantium*', is come full circle in '*Byzantium*'. '*Byzantium*' ends on a note of utter sadness.

In this connection we can think of the Obermann poems of Matthew Arnold. Arnold wrote his '*Stanzas in Memory of the Author of "Ober-*

mann", in 1849; it was 1867 when his 'Obermann Once More' was first published. The long interval of about twenty years had brought a change in Arnold's outlook. The pathos of the first poem was explicit—

A wounded human spirit turns,

Here, on its bed of pain.

But, in the second poem, Arnold attempts to strike a joyous note. Before his vision had ended, he could hear the message of Obermann :

What still of strength is left, employ,

That end to help men gain :

*One mighty wave of thought and joy*

*Lifting mankind amain.*

This note of hope seems rather forced. Apart from the fact that the interval between the composition of the two Byzantine poems was much shorter, Yeats could never bring himself to accepting any forced solution. A comparative study of the two Obermann poems and the two Byzantine poems can only reveal that, in certain respects at least, Yeats is a greater poet than Arnold. Yeats was wiser in his sadness at the end of 'Byzantium' than Arnold in his sudden spurt of gladness at the close of 'Obermann Once More'. Yeats's lack of conviction sounds truer than Arnold's apparently passionate sincerity.

Yeats remained essentially romantic throughout his poetic career. His dissatisfaction with reality can be traced to his youthful period when he wrote 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree', in which is expressed his longing to escape from urban unrest to rural peace. The contrast between the tranquillity of the 'bee-loud glade' and the dreariness of the 'pavements gray' of the city is reminiscent of Wordsworth. It is a simple, nostalgic poem. Though thematically 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree' and the Byzantine poems are somewhat related, the latter poems are much more complex. Yeats had not only developed and expounded his 'System' in *A Vision* in course of about thirty-six years that separated 'The Lake Isle' from the Byzantine poems, he was no longer the innocent youth. To use the memorable words of Keats whose Odes the Byzantine poems so closely resemble, darkness had by now entered the chamber of Yeats's maiden thought. If 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree' is a song of innocence, the Byzantine poems are the songs of experience.

When the Byzantium poems were written, Yeats, in his sixties, was diseased and physically weak. So he could not enjoy the life of the flesh. 'Fastened to a dying animal', he could neither escape from the body nor enjoy the life of the spirit. This is a crucial stage of the human soul and it is vividly mirrored in the Byzantium poems. Yeats was in an awkward predicament and for a moment he thought that art could offer

him a refuge. It was not so much the Unity of Being or any such philosophical idea as some kind of way out from the impasse that he was looking for. The question was too urgent and intimate for him to theorise upon. Himself an artist, he thought of taking refuge in art. (Like Keats, Yeats is the type not so much of the poet as of the artist.) The idea of Byzantium naturally comes to his mind as he had come to regard it as a symbol of artistic perfection. Art appeared to Yeats to be an emblem of permanence in the midst of flux in the same way as it appeared to Keats.

All passes ; Art alone

Enduring stays to us.

The motto that Selincourt suggests from Leonardo for Keats's 'Ode on a Grecian Urn'—'cosa bella morta passa e non d'arte' ("Mortal beauties pass away, but not those of art")—sums up one of the leading ideas of Yeats's 'Byzantium' poems. But in so far as the negative note at the end of 'Byzantium' is concerned Yeats' poem resembles 'Ode to a Nightingale' rather than 'Ode on a Grecian Urn'. The affirmation to which Keats could attain by making beauty and truth synonymous was beyond Yeats, Art, for Yeats, could be a temporary shelter but not a permanent resting-place, and at the end of 'Byzantium' he was left where he had begun in 'Sailing to Byzantium', a passion's slave whose body had become an affliction of his soul.

'Sailing to Byzantium' begins abruptly, *in medias res*, but with an agony that pervades not only this poem but also 'Byzantium'. The poet finds himself a complete stranger in a world given to physical enjoyment. To take 'That is no country for old men' as a reference specifically to Ireland, as scholars like Professor A. Norman Jeffares have done, is unnecessarily to minimise the universality of the poem's appeal. As for the pictures that follow, they are examples of mere physical existence. These images of the sensual world are powerfully evoked. Even death is integrated into this world, in spite of the devastating quibble in the phrase 'dying generations'. The phrase 'that sensual music' betrays Yeats's own ineffectual longing for such a life. This is, in a way, a kind of philosophy ; call it the creed of the *mortal* life, if you will. This is the philosophy 'commended' by all earthly creatures, fish, flesh or fowl. But there is also the creed of *immortal* life ; that is the significance of the word 'unageing'. If there is the ephemeral world of nature, there is also the permanent world of art.

The only alternative to 'sensual music' of the first stanza that is offered in the second is a kind of spiritual music—the song of the soul celebrated by Plato in his *Republic*. The disgust that Yeats felt for old age is fully expressed through his image of 'a tattered coat upon a stick',

a disgust which is expressed no less tellingly in the poem, 'The Tower' :

What shall I do with this absurdity—  
O heart, troubled heart—this caricature,  
Decrepit age that has been tied to me  
As to a dog's tail ?

The only way through which Yeats can escape is by overcoming the flesh. He has come to the sacred city to learn the song of the spirit.

But who are there to teach him ? He appeals to the sages, holy men who have been purified by God's fire. They are like the figures in the gold mosaic. Yeats seems to visualise them in a work of art, recalling perhaps the martyrs on one side of a great Byzantine mosaic on the walls of St. Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna. (Yeats visited Ravenna accompanied by Lady Gregory and saw a number of Byzantine churches.) His heart should be consumed away since the heart is the seat of desires and it is his desires that have led to his undoing. The saints should 'perne in a gyre'. A perne is a dialect word, meaning a bobbin, which is used here as a verb. So the phrase means that they should 'come spiralling down, like the hawk in its downward flight'. 'The artifice of eternity' is 'the eternity of art', as opposed to the transience of nature. That is why the next stanza, which is also the last, begins with the phrase 'Once out of nature'.

Now that Yeats transcends nature, he intends to be transformed into the golden bird that sings on the golden bough. Yeats's own note on the poem says : 'I have read somewhere that in the Emperor's palace at Byzantium was a tree made of gold and silver, and artificial birds that sang'. These artificial birds are not artificial in a pejorative sense ; they are part of the 'artifices of eternity', which are more or less identical with 'the monuments of unageing intellect' of the first stanza. The 'eternal and artificial' bird towards the close of the poem affords a contrast to 'birds in the trees' at its beginning, symbolising respectively detachment and enjoyment, knowledge and ignorance, immortality and mortality. I think Yeats had in mind the Rigvedic passage ( I.14.20 ) quoted in the *Mundaka Upanishad* ( III.1.1 ) and elsewhere :

Two birds, fast bound companions,  
Clasp close the self-same tree.  
Of these two, the one eats sweet fruit ;  
The other looks on without eating.

(*The Thirteen Principal Upanishads*, tr.

R.E. Hume, O.U.P., 1949, p.374)

It was not only his enthusiasm for Shri Purohit Swami but also his

own interest in the Upanishads that led Yeats to collaboration with the Swami in their translation.

As in 'Sailing to Byzantium', the opening stanza of 'Byzantium' is concerned with the world of flesh and blood. The beginning of 'Byzantium', however, is less abrupt. For one thing, the word 'sailing' in the title of the first poem has implied some kind of effort on the part of the poet, effort to reach the life of the spirit. Now that the poet is already in Byzantium, the question of such effort does not arise. Hence the introductory tone of the second poem is quieter. Day is the symbol of life's animal activities while night stands for life's serene side. Yeats must have carefully read that beautiful but paradoxical stanza towards the end of the Second Chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gita* :

That which is night to all creatures, in that state the ascetic keeps awake. And that in which all creatures keep awake is night to the sage.

Night is also somewhat suggestive of infinity, because at night the outlines of things rapidly vanish. 'The unpurged images of day' means 'the objects in the world of workaday life'. The drunken soldiers and the night-revellers are quietened by the great cathedral gong, which symbolises the call to the life of the spirit. This is also symbolised by 'dome', a constant feature of Byzantine art prominently marked in the cathedral structures. The lofty domes naturally stand for the ascent of life from the plane of the body to the level of the soul. The 'fury' suggests what is noble in human beings and 'mire' suggests what is base.

The second stanza of 'Byzantium' introduces a spectre. This spirit will teach Yeats wisdom which he so badly needs. This superhuman form or animating dead spirit—'shade more than man'—would summon the poet's spirit when it was going to be liberated from the triviality and complexity of life and would make it undergo reincarnation. From 'shade' comes 'death', as a liberator. One can come out of the labyrinth of life only through the clue supplied by death. The bobbin ('perne') which winds can also unwind. 'Breathless' might be Yeats's subtle way of describing somebody agitated with the excitement of physical life. With death comes also the eternal life: 'I call it death-in-life and life-in-death'. The Coleridgean reminiscence adds poignancy to the stanza. But of much greater significance are the personal reminiscences of Yeats on which this stanza is based. He and his wife were greatly interested in theosophy and spiritualism. 'Before me floats an image, man or shade' had its origin in Yeats's personal experience of seances.

But it is not death alone that can show the way to a new life, art also

can do it. Cocks herald the dawn, here the dawn of a new life. In its purified form the soul becomes a golden singing-bird, changeless and spiritual, scornful of all human traits. This bird is a more rarefied form of the bird 'set upon a golden bough' in the first Byzantine poem. The goldsmith's art is also part of 'the artifices of eternity'. In the mosaics is depicted the spiritual experience. The creative talents of the goldsmiths and the artists who created the mosaics have emerged triumphant over human limitations—over 'the fury and the mire of human veins'.

The fourth stanza, at the midnight pealing from the cathedral, invites yearning souls to the purgatorial dance. There was a time when the Emperor lived a life of luxury and there were illumination and dancing in his halls. Now that the halls are mere ruins, the aspects of animal existence have vanished from the imperial setting. It now belongs to the 'monuments of unageing intellect'. The light that now illumines the spacious halls is the light of the spirit. Art and its appeal have become entirely spiritual while formerly, during the lifetime of the Emperors, they were entirely sensual. The word 'spirits' we may interpret in its older sense of 'moods, emotions', spirit being the distilment of blood. The 'dance' in line 30 is a different kind of dance, dance of the spirit. The word 'trance' once again reminds us of the seances that Yeats and Mrs. Yeats used to hold. Since the flame in 'The agony of flame' is no physical fire, it cannot singe a sleeve, not to speak of burning.

The dance continues in the concluding stanza of 'Byzantium'. Since the Mediterranean Sea abounds in dolphins, Yeats's reference to the dolphin is especially apt. Yeats recalls the old legend of the saints carried by dolphins. As dolphins are of a playful nature, they stand for the raptures of the animal existence. We cannot ignore our animal existence but we have to transcend it; we have to build a lofty super-structure of the soul on the foundation of the body. The 'flood' is the sea, the sea of life. 'The smithies break the flood' implies that art triumphs over nature. The smith, the artificer, creates a work of art (the golden bird, for instance) which can check the flood of mortality. Similarly the marbles signify the pattern, the design of art, which to Yeats is a spiritual factor and not a physical fact. We can find our way to eternity through the thoroughfare of art. But Yeats is being too much of a poet, perhaps. His images are coming torrentially and he is accumulating images on image's head. The kaleidoscopic images naturally follow from the 'dolphin' of the first line of the stanza. The dolphin is noted for its changes of colour when taken out of the water. May I suggest that Yeats recalls here these exquisite lines of Byron's *Childe Harold*, Canto IV;

Parting day  
 Dies like the dolphin, whom each pang imbues  
 With a new colour as it gasps away,  
 The last still loveliest.

The images that come to Yeats's mind may be the images associated with his visit to Ravenna, or they may be the distillation of a lifetime's experience appearing in a flash before the mind's eye of a drowning man. But Yeats concludes by retaining only two of the images—the two most important images in the two poems—and he puts them in a line which is the finest in the Byzantium poems :

That dolphin-torn, that gong-tormented sea.

The 'dolphin-torn' sea stands for the animal side of life. 'Gong-tormented' has its physical implications. The 'gong' seems to strike at the very heart of the water. The more significant implications of the 'gong' are on a higher plane. The 'gong' sounds the call to spiritual life and we are tormented when we fail to respond to that call. Yeats felt this torment in all its intensity. He realised the necessity of the response but the 'dying animal, inside him prevented him from responding. This is Yeats's tragedy but this is also the tragedy of Everyman. This is the central poignancy of Yeats's Byzantine poems. Both the poems in their entirety can be summed up in one single phrase—the 'gong-tormented sea'.

# HERBERT READ AND MODERN CRITICISM

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SAURENDRANATH BASU

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'My profoundest experience', says Read, 'has been, not religious, nor moral, but aesthetic'.<sup>1</sup> On the strength of this experience he has built for himself a 'general philosophy' of life. His awareness of the realities of life from the beginning has been connected inseparably with a belief that art is a thing of 'fundamental value'<sup>2</sup> to life, that it is the 'redemption of Life', and that aesthetic emotions alone give us the experience of that which is 'exquisite in Life'.<sup>3</sup>

What strikes us is that he has avoided any *purely* metaphysical interest in the issues of life from the beginning. It was on Frank Rutter's advice that he became 'careful to distinguish between Philosophy and Metaphysics and avoid the latter as the Devil'.<sup>4</sup> The reason is, he explains :

It only leads to involutions and mental gymnastics of no permanent value, and though showing you to be a mighty clever fellow, damning the artistic interest of your work.<sup>5</sup>

He avoided 'Metaphysics' at any rate, but not ethics. He knew for certain if aesthetic experience was to be established as the highest experience of life it required an ethical sanction. He came to acknowledge moral consciousness as a central factor in the very texture of life, as well as in the mode of aesthetic experience itself ; but he thought that a moral factor in both life and art needs no sanction and should seek no sanction from outside. In short he sought an interrelation of the values of life and those of art only in their implicitness.

The whole question of art and morality, or of art and society, or of art and life itself is the degree of implicitness. If we have any faith in life left in us, we should on that basis aspire to nobility, to goodness, to whatever ethical term we may adopt for the continuous affirmation of life itself. But we do not serve this cause by preachment, or by any direct intentions on our neighbours. The moralists would say that we serve by example, by unconscious habit. We, who are not moralists,



but artists, must make the same asserveration : the morality is implicit in the art, in the for and style of it, finally in the impalpable tone of it.<sup>6</sup>

The significance that Read attaches to art and aesthetic experience as a purifying and revitalising agent of the whole mode of our life is characterized by his basic faith : '... the values of art are absolute'.<sup>7</sup> An assertion of this aesthetic attitude has, at another level, transformed his views on the social and cultural history of man. Thus he observes :

Among the forces making for social integration, art, in my opinion, is supreme. I know that the supreme place would more commonly be given to religion, and personally I do not wish, in this respect, to deny the claims of religion. But we are speaking here of life in its concrete manifestations, of man's work and the products of his work, of its material environment and civilized amenities ; and though a moral factor does enter into all this, it is as the subjective aspect of an activity which in practice can only be realized through the senses, as aesthetic experience.

Now, the manner in which art came to acquire central importance in Read's philosophy of life itself reveals how urgent it was for him to give to art such an important distinction. This is a philosophy that animated his faith in life during a most difficult period of his life, the First World War. The entire superstructure of his aesthetic ideas and approach has in it the same note of urgency of a renewal of faith in life, the same accent on revitalizing the entire mode of life through art. He argues that art 'can change the chemical constitution of the social crystal' and declares, '.....It is my fundamental belief'.<sup>8</sup> On the basis of this belief he reiterates :

If I thought that the World could be saved and the happiness of mankind guaranteed by the sacrifice of aesthetic sensibility, I would not hesitate to accept that sacrifice. But my belief is just the contrary. It is because I see everywhere the threatening shadow of the catastrophe that overtakes a people without vision that I strive to reanimate the *only philosophy* that can save us'.<sup>10</sup>

Read's anxiety and concern for human civilization and culture is evident in his seeking to 'reanimate' a philosophy 'that can save us'. Whether this is the 'only philosophy' and there can be no other, this may be a very interesting topic of discussion, but for our purpose unprofitable. What we are concerned with is how far this insistence on the 'only philosophy' has shaped Read's views, beliefs and arguments on purely literary

and poetic issues, particularly his theory of poetry and literary criticism. Our next concern is to examine whether these views, such as they are, can claim any significance.

## 2.

Let us enquire at the outset what Read's 'fundamental belief' has led him to. Because the mode and 'values of art are absolute' Read does not acknowledge the reality of a historical tradition in the background of the creative mode of art. He does not believe in 'such figments as the spirit of the age' but believes in 'the simple truth' that 'man (including the artist) is moulded by circumstance'.<sup>11</sup> By circumstance he means hereditary, social and environmental factors which go to the shaping of the artist's individuality and personality. In so far as art is 'essence' the background of a historical tradition for him is an 'abstract entity'.<sup>12</sup> He identifies art 'with the life force itself', a force that 'achieves, in human consciousness, the establishment of being'.<sup>13</sup> In view of his affirmation of faith in the absolute values of art and poetry the concept of a poetic or artistic mode beyond any historical and cultural tradition may go well. But when he comes to employ this faith in his interpretation of poetry as a verbal art he seems to expose his limitations.<sup>14</sup>

In whatever way Read has analysed poetry—as vision, as intelligence, as intuition, or as a symbolic discourse—at different times, he has centred his analysis mainly on poetic essence. He has transformed Coleridge's concept of organic form<sup>15</sup> into the ideal of an autonomous emergence of the poem.<sup>16</sup> The purely technical aspect of the poem, for him, is a psychological fact and assumes importance inasmuch as it happens below rational consciousness. Hence criticism, he believes, does not consist in analysing the 'poem' as a verbal art, because technique has no separate reality of its own. Criticism should begin in the recognition of the mystery of the creative act—the mystery as he understands it.

On the other hand, the New Critics, who make a close technical analysis of the poem, do not accept Coleridge's concept of 'organic form'<sup>17</sup> as an autonomous happening, but as an organic growth in which the parts are integrated into a structural whole<sup>18</sup>. Technique thus, becomes a living reality in the context of the poem, and an analysis of it justifies a rational basis of the critical act. For Read, the aesthetic experience of poetry is essentially cognitive in nature, a conclusion which does not seem to have been disputed by the New Critics.<sup>19</sup> Read has to prove his thesis by concentrating on the philosophical value of poetry and by transcending a rational basis of criticism of the 'poem';

the New Critics, on the other hand, can attempt to do it in the context of the 'poem' itself by analysing the technique and structure of the poem. Read's flaw, as Solomon Fishman points out, is in his poetics itself. Fishman points out that 'to deny the rational basis of criticism, or even to relegate it to a secondary position, is to dissolve criticism by merging it with the poem'.<sup>20</sup>

By refusing to analyse the technique of the poem—an analysis which implies an evaluation of the poem as a *Verbal Art*—Read has deliberately kept himself away from the main and significant stream of modern critical practice. Moreover, he has been one of the most eloquent and dogmatic spokesmen of the cognitive and absolute value of poetry in our time; yet he does not seem to focus precisely what aesthetic qualities constitute the greatness of poetry as *poetry*. He remains content with such explanations as :

Some kind of immateriality is, of course, intrinsic to the poetic process. Poetry is consistent only in its shadowiness, its indeterminacy, its intangibility.<sup>21</sup>

He seeks to fence poetry off from all moral, religious and political incursions, to exclude from poetry 'all judgements and prejudices proceeding from the ego'.<sup>22</sup> In a word, he seeks nothing less than an ideal entity in poetry, and his first duty is to keep it so. Hence he discerns its value and significance in its creative experience and creative mystery; but he has necessarily had to discern it in its effect too. The question is : how does Read explain these phenomena ? He says :

A light, a glory, a fair luminous mist—we *cannot find more precise words* to describe the experience of poetry.<sup>23</sup>

And :

The immediate object of the poetic experience refuses to be identified : it is infinite and eternal, formless and uninformed.<sup>24</sup>

As regards the creative mechanism of the poem and its impact as a verbal art, he says :

We must.....conceive the poem as in some sense a recollection or recovery of the original word-gesture from which language itself developed by the process of fragmentation and elaboration. If we listen to a surviving form of relatively primitive poetry, a Spanish *flamenco* for example, we are conscious of a continuous sound-pattern, highly inflected, but not rationally grammatic—a long-drawn-out cry of anguish or joy. The poetry is in this configuration of sound : a *Volume* of sound with analogues in the plastic volumes of sculpture. It is this *vocal* symbol that constitutes the felt impact of the poem.<sup>25</sup>

Read has gradually broadened his planes of explanation of the absolute and cognitive value of poetry in terms of the creative mystery and creative experience of poetry as vision, intelligence, intuition, as a symbolic mode of discourse at different times. And this he has done with the manifest intention of keeping poetry 'pure' in essence and embodiment. He has succeeded in achieving this in so far as he has converted poetry into a super-real entity. 'Art is an affirmation', says Read, 'not of reality, but of man's ability to create something beyond reality'. He explains :

We might say that art is the creation of values by which we judge reality—values that represent all that is positive and expansive, of all that is formative and definitive, of clarity and concentration and unity. Its principles are not moral, are not even spiritual : they are harmonic, and therefore physical. But as such they are paradigms of all intellectual beauty ; the patterns of all noble habit. There is no perception of beautiful action—no ideal of equity or love—that is not first evolved in its material perfection in a work of art. Art discovers beauty, for our benefit, for our emulation, for our consolation. All moral impulses, all feelings of goodness, all grace and truth, are but shadows cast from the dance of life ; shadows cast, as Shelley said, in his great poem, by the light of Intellectual Beauty.<sup>26</sup>

This is a mode of argument which glorifies the values of art and poetry with an unusual amount of zest and verve, but it seems to arouse little interest in poetry *as poetry*. Moreover, by its very nature an argument of this kind seems to fail to point out precisely what aesthetic qualities constitute the greatness of poetry *as poetry* as a *verbal art*.

### 3

There can indeed be no denying the fact that in aim and practice Read has taken to criticism as a serious task. He considers Coleridge as 'the greatest critic in English literature'<sup>27</sup> and in his essay on Coleridge, 'Coleridge as Critic' (1949), he seems to have sought a justification for his own critical method. Coleridge, he says, 'revealed to the world for the first time some part of the mystery of genius and of the universal and eternal significance of art.'<sup>28</sup>

What has made Coleridge the kind of critic that he is ? Coleridge, Read believes, introduced for the first time a philosophical method of criticism. He argues that Coleridge's literary criticism gathers its 'tentative power' from 'the use of the systematic method he had established

by his philosophical speculations',<sup>29</sup> and that 'philosophy directed the course and determined the ends of Coleridge's criticism'.<sup>30</sup> Read suggests that the particular significance of Coleridge lies in his formulation of the 'romantic principle' in the background of his critical activities. This 'romantic principle' consists in the idea that '.....the imagination is a shaping power, an energy which fuses, melts and recombines the elements of perception, and bodies them forth in a unity or synthesis which is the work of art'. Read remarks :

Coleridge everywhere insists on the difference between "form as proceeding" and "shape as super-induced"—"the latter is either the death or the imprisonment of the thing ;—the former is its self-witnessing and self-effected sphere of agency".<sup>31</sup>

Because Coleridge based his criticism on this philosophic principle he introduced a mode of critical practice that was not known to Dryden, Warton and Johnson. Dryden, Warton and Johnson practised a 'criticism of technique, of craftsmanship' which was 'at best an individualistic and arbitrary activity'.<sup>32</sup>

In the wanton manner in which he has handled the critical practices of Dryden, Warton and Johnson, Read seems to be making a measure of Coleridge's critical philosophy and method in a facile mood of self-justification. What he appears to commend is that criticism proper, which is a philosophic activity, as he understands it, and which reveals the eternal significance of poetry and art, has no room for any discursive analysis of the technique or craftsmanship of the poem. But Coleridge does not seem to deny the necessity of analysing different parts of the poem for a realization of what it has embodied. He says :

The spirit of poetry, like all other living powers, must of necessity circumscribe itself by rules, were it only to unite power with beauty. It *must embody* in order to *reveal itself* ; but a living body is of necessity *an organized one* ; and *What is organization* but the *connection of parts in and for a whole so that each part is at once end and means* ?—This is no discovery of criticism ;—it is a necessity of the human mind:<sup>33</sup>

Read appears to minimize the fact that poetry is an embodied entity and is an 'organization' of 'parts' into an organic whole however self-shaping the process of poetry may be. M.H.Abrams suggests that by 'organic unity' Coleridge meant 'a self-evolved system, constituted by a living interdependence of parts, whose identity cannot survive their removal from the whole'.<sup>34</sup> Read's emphasis on the self-shaping wholeness of 'poetry' seems to have made him averse to a discursive analysis of the parts of the 'poem'.

Read's presence is a bit disturbing in the contemporary situation of literary criticism, but he cannot simply be ignored. He has given us perceptive and valuable insight into the mode of poetry, and has extended our interest in the creative personalities of authors and poets for about half a century. His beliefs and convictions may not win our consent because from the beginning, however he may try to define and redefine them, they have been nourished on a particular attitude to life and art. But as a critic he is, what T.S. Eliot says a critic must be, a 'whole man, a man with convictions and principles, and of knowledge and experience of life'.<sup>35</sup> He believed to the end in the face of the New Criticism that no amount of objective and technical analysis, however carefully done, can help us appreciate the aesthetic value of a poem.<sup>36</sup> The 'form' of poetry, he believes, is a spontaneous and impersonal emergence of an 'image of truth new born',<sup>37</sup> a manifestation, so to speak; and can be '*experienced* only as a suspension of time and motion, as a still existence'.<sup>38</sup> Criticism, thus, has its 'own mode of apprehension', and the success of the critic in interpreting the aesthetic value of the poetic form is assured 'in the degree that his own instrument is subtle and refined, sensitive and above all sympathetic'.<sup>39</sup> For Read the entire analytic industry of the New Criticism is an exercise in uncreative scholarship, and is 'in some sense a cautious substitute for the activity of the imagination'.<sup>40</sup> Poetry is an apprehension of reality—a living 'image of truth'; but in the hands of the New Critics this living reality has degenerated into a 'dead and desiccated body'.<sup>41</sup> It is extremely doubtful whether Read's idea about the critic's own mode of apprehension of the aesthetic value of a poem leads to anything short of making criticism itself a fresh revelation of a new 'image'. But he sensitively points to the limitations of mere analytic dexterity in the practice of criticism.<sup>42</sup> The analytic method of the New Criticism may be a training of critical sensibility in the understanding and enjoyment of poetry; but Read argues for a kind of criticism the beginning and end of which is a joy of 'recognition' born of sensitivity. He warns us that training in objective and discursive analysis will not help us enjoy poetry, rather will prove to be only a futile exercise in the art of understanding it.<sup>43</sup> The highest quality of poetry escapes any rational analysis'. What is a mode of visual or poetic cognition', he says, 'cannot also be a mode of rational cognition'.<sup>44</sup> He has remained consistently and scrupulously faithful to this radical belief and has avoided any analysis, explanation and substantial evaluation of the poem.

Read does not seem to have been successful in keeping the integrity

and purity of poetic entity inviolate, except by converting it into a super-real entity. But the very seriousness and integrity with which he has sought to establish his faith and argued for art as a 'governing mechanism'<sup>45</sup> of life commands admiration in an age in which purely aesthetic or literary values do not seem to move us immediately and passionately.

## REFERENCES

1. *The Contrary Experience* (London, 1963) p. 345.
2. (Recorded in the War Diary on 14.II.17) *Ibid.*, p. 82.
3. (Recorded in the War Diary on 15. VIII. 16) *Ibid.*, p. 78.
4. (Recorded in the War Diary on 2. VI. 18) *Ibid.*, p. 131.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Truth Is More Sacred* (London, 1961) pp. 136-137.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 221.
8. *The Grass Roots of Art* : (A Meridian Book, Cleveland and New York, 1961) p. 119.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 98.
10. *The Forms of Things Unknown* (London, 1960) p. 12. Italics mine.
- Cf. 'I believe that there is only one way of saving our civilization and that is by so reforming its constituent societies that...the concrete sensuous phenomena of art is once more spontaneously manifested in our daily lives.'
- H. Read : *Art and Alienation* (London, 1967) p. 26.
11. *Truth is More Sacred* (London, 1961) p. 211.
12. 'The Attributes of Criticism' : *Poetry and Experience* (London, 1967) p. 24.
- Cf. 'Historically there is no discontinuity between the culture of the Middle Ages and the culture of the Renaissance. The same Abstract entities continue to embrace the concrete differences of particular persons in particular places at particular times. It is possible to show that the opposition between such seemingly abstract entities as Scholasticism and Empiricism corresponds to deep-rooted psychological orientations which from time to time alternate in their distribution or dominance.'
- Ibid.*, pp. 25-26.
13. *The Origins of Form in Art* (London; 1965) p. 8.
14. While studying the tradition of English poetry (*Phases of English Poetry*, 1928) Read has seen it as a manifestation of absolute essence, and from the point of view of sensibility manifested in different phases he has found no development. Of course in respect of directness and honesty with which the poet expresses his sensibility he has noticed a progressive refinement.
15. Cf. 'The form is mechanic, when on any given material we impress a pre-determined form, not necessarily arising out of the properties of the materials;—as when to a mass of wet clay, we give whatever shape we wish it to retain when hardened. The organic form, on the other hand, is innate; it shapes, as it develops itself from within, and the fulness of its development is one and the same with the perfection of its outward form. Such as the life is, such is the form.'

(S. T. Coleridge: 'Shakespeare's Judgement equal to his Genius' *Lectures on Shakespeare etc.* Everyman Library Edn. J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd. London, 1951 pp. 46-47)

16. M.H. Abrams argues on the other hand, that Coleridge 'establishes the making of poems to be a deliberate art, rather than the spontaneous overflow of feeling' (*The Mirror and the Lamp*, The Norton Library, New York, 1958 p. 117) and that Coleridge 'demonstrates how poetry can be natural yet regular, lawful without being legislated, and *rationally explicable* after the fact although intuitive at the moment of composition, by replacing the concept of rules imposed from outside by the concept of the inherent laws of the imaginative process' (*Ibid.*, p. 123 *italics mine*).

17. Coleridge's notions of the organic form and the imagination gave to New Criticism its theoretical foundation. That is why Richard Foster argues so succinctly and persuasively that the New Critics are essentially romantic.

Richard Foster: *The New Romantics* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1962)

18. Cf. 'The spirit of poetry, like all other living powers, must of necessity circumscribe itself by rules, were it only to unite power with beauty. It must embody in order to reveal itself; but a living body is of necessity an organized one; and what is organization but the connection of parts in and for a whole, so that each part is at once end and means?—This is no discovery of criticism; it is a necessity of the human mind ...'

S.T. Coleridge: *Lectures on Shakespeare etc.* Loc. cit. pp. 45-46.

19. The reader may refer to Solomon Fishman's essay 'Sir Herbert Read: Poetics vs. Criticism': *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*: Vol. XIII: No. 2 (Dec., 1954 pp. 156-162) where there is a perceptive presentation of the point of view of the New Criticism and at the same time a sensible attempt to understand Read's point of view.

20. Solomon Fishman 'Sir Herbert Read: Poetics Vs. Criticism' Loc. cit. p. 161,

21. *The Forms of Things Unknown* (London, 1960) p. 132.

22. 'The Poet and his Muse': *The Origins of Form in Art* (London, 1965), p. 145

23. *The Forms of Things Unknown*, p. 132. *Italics mine*.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 135.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 116.

26. *The Grass Roots of Art*: (Meridian Book, Cleveland and New York, 1961) p. 99.

27. Read's review of *Coleridge's Miscellaneous Criticism* ed. by Thomas M. Raysor: *The Spectator* No. 5648 (Friday, Sept. 25, 1936) p. 504.

28. 'Coleridge as Critic': *The True Voice of Feeling* (London, 1954) p. 183.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 175.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 181.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 178.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 169.

33. S.T. Coleridge: 'Shakespeare's Judgement Equal to his Genius': *Lectures on Shakespeare etc.* (Everyman Library, J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., London, 1951) pp. 45-46 *Italics mine*.

34. M.H. Abrams: *The Mirror and the Lamp* (The Norton Library, New York, 1958) p. 175.

35. T.S. Eliot: 'The Frontiers of Criticism': *On Poetry and Poets* (London, 1957) p. 116.

36. In such a belief Read is not quite alone. Edwin Muir, for one, shares his belief.



Cf. 'We learn about poetry from poetry, and we can go on learning until we have no longer much interest in asking what poetry is. Analysis, especially if it is applied to early, makes the poem into a Problem instead of an experience. And if the beginner is unlucky, it may become a problem before it has ever been an experience. He will set about analyzing it without having heard "the true voice of feeling", and discover a great number of things about it without having been moved by it.'

(Edwin Muir: 'Criticism and the Poet': *The Estate of Poetry*, London, 1962, p. 72).

37. 'The Falth of a Critic' : *Poetry and Experience* (London, 1967) p. 18.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

39. 'The Style of Criticism,' *Ibid.*, p. 60.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 51.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 52.

42. In fact, Read has gone so far as to hold the analytic dexterity of contemporary criticism partly responsible for the decline of modern poetry.'

'The art of poetry is depressed and though the causes of its decline must be sought in social and economic development which are beyond the control of critics, yet criticism must be held responsible for the present state of poetry in so far as it has betrayed its own highest ideal, which should be an artistic ideal.'

('The Style of criticism' : *Poetry and Experience* London, 1967, p. 59).

Again in a letter to Stephen Spender Read writes :

'The New Criticism I regard as a retreat into the funk-hole of "objective analysis"; an incapacity to estimate contemporary values. It has killed modern poetry, whereas modern painting and sculpture remain vital. I don't claim the credit for this, but the whole arena of modern art has a dynamic freedom that is lacking in literature (drama excepted perhaps). A "new criticism" of modern art, is perhaps not unthinkable, but happily it does not exist.'

(Read's letter to Stephen Spender : quoted by Spender in 'Dialogue with a Recognizer' : *The Struggle of the Modern*, London, 1963, p. 181.)

Spender seems to be echoing Read's complaint when he says that the zeal of intellectual analysis of the academic critics has influenced the young modern poets to put consciously 'guaranteed substances into their poem'. Spender comments :

'Thus we get a process of qualities being extracted from poems which have been written and fitted into those which are being written. A kind of synthetic poetry is produced which is difficult to distinguish from real poetry, and this further complicates the role of modern criticism.'

Stephen Spender : *The Creative Element* (London, 1954) p. 185.

And in the same vein John Bayley castigates analytic critics who do not respond to the ultimate mystery in poetry. The danger of analysis is that 'by ignoring the old conception of taste, natural or acquired, it may come more and more to accept what one might call the richly mediocre'.

(John Bayley : *The Romantic Survival*, London, 1959, p. 70) Bayley suggests : 'It is for this reason that we have so much poor contemporary poetry in which the poet, by using his head, has involved and compromised the analyst in a way in which he could not have hoped to take in a romantic critic by using, as it were, a dud drug' (*Ibid.*, p. 71). The contemporary poet often writes for the critic and thus, the poetry analyst is in danger of performing the same disservice for modern verse as the psychoanalyst has for the modern novel' (*Ibid.*, pp. 71-72). Bayley argues, that the solution must lie in a partial return to the critical premises of romanticism in the

whole-hearted submission to a poetic experience before we begin to analyse it. Certainly we should not undervalue the advantages to be gained from the close and careful reading of a poem, and from the examination of its difficulties and its component effects. But such a reading should be a secondary process and should modify our more instinctive reaction to the life of the poem, not determine it. A poem is both ghost and machine, and though a machine can be dismantled and demonstrated without reverence, a ghost is still entitled to be treated with something of the old romantic awe.' (*Ibid.*, pp 72-73)

43. Cf. 'The great danger of this kind of criticism is that it shuts the poem in upon itself as an object, not of enjoyment but of scrutiny, and cuts it off from the air which it should breathe and its spontaneous operation on those who are capable of receiving it. Everything is slowed down or attested; the poem cannot get on; the movement, and the movement of a poem is an essential part of it, is held up, while we examine its parts in isolation. One thinks of a laboratory; and indeed the analysis of poetry, pushed to this length, resembles a scientific test.'

(Edwin Muir: 'Criticism and the Poet': *The Estate of Poetry*, London, 1962, p. 69)

Cf. 'The new criticism was salutary enough while it remained an influence; it was a useful countervailing force against all sorts of loose and sentimental criticism. But from an influence it has become a sanctioned method, and a method, once it is established, becomes in spite of itself an instrument of power. It determines standards, and dictates to the critic and to the poet. I should say that there are poets who must be daunted by the reflection that, if they venture upon a poem, they may find it being put through that formidable mill.' (*Ibid.*, pp 75-76).

44 *Poetry and Experience* (London, 1967) p. 58.

45. *Education Through Art* (London, 1958) p. 14.

Cf. It is art and not science that gives a meaning to life, not merely in the sense of overcoming alienation (from nature, from society, from self), but in the sense of reconciling man to his destiny, which is death. Not merely death in the physical sense, but that form of death which is indifference, spiritual *accidia*.'

H. Read: *Art and Alienation* (London, 1967) p. 35.

# THE MODERNITY OF DE LA MARE'S POETRY (1873—1956)

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BHUPENDRA NATH SEAL

Walter de la Mare is one of the major and most popular British poets of the present age, which is marked by a romantic survival as well as a striking reaction against the poetry of the early nineteenth century. Easily associated with the Georgians, de la Mare has kept alive the last flicker of the romantic tradition and has also come a step further in the new paths of English poetry.

Few critics have related de la Mare essentially to the present age. And it is a pity that he is regarded more as a traditionalist who has looked backwards than as one who is in tune with the spirit of the present age. F. R. Leavis calls de la Mare 'the belated last poet of the romantic tradition'. I. A. Richards labels him as an escapist. G. S. Fraser observes : "Walter de la Mare does not seem contemporary at all"<sup>1</sup> W. W. Robson comments : "De la Mare's poetry is rooted in reminiscence. De la Mare owes nothing to the modern school"<sup>2</sup> Such criticism of de la Mare contains some truth but not the whole truth. The fact is that de la Mare, although traditional in certain points, is essentially modern in spirit but his modernity has not been sufficiently recognised. This is somewhat surprising considering the fact that some of the most 'modern' of modern poets—stalwarts like Yeats, Lawrence, Elliot and Auden—have all been admirers of de la Mare's poetry.

What, however, are the main features of modernity, and how are they reflected in de la Mare's poetry ? Henry Charles Duffin, while speaking of de la Mare and the subjects of Modern poetry, echoes Louis Macneice, an eminent modernist : 'The poet of today—the poet of the last twenty five years—must face the prose of existence, the utilities of life, the sine quanon. Communism, sex, progress, Freudianism, the decay of Civilization ; otherwise, it is to be labelled "escapist"<sup>3</sup>. In the introduction to his anthology, 'The Modern Poets' World', James Reeves uses the phrases of Abraham Cowley to characterise the present age : 'It is a various age in which new fashions in every department of thought have replaced traditional conceptions. The systematic study of human mind which goes by the name of psychology, for instance, is reflected in the

poems of Graves, Eliot, Auden, Spender and Empson'.<sup>4</sup> Besides, radical scepticism, confusion and anxiety are widely pervasive in modern poetry.

The reason why de la Mare is not regarded as sufficiently modern can be found in the fact that, in his own way, he is an anti-intellectual like the Romantic poets. His strange fascination for the supernatural has made him a romantic exile in this age of high regard for the intellect. Yet in spite of his looking backwards, it can be safely asserted that de la Mare is no less a modern and has not written out of his time. He has never been completely oblivious of the materialistic aspects of modern life. He is quite aware of the hard realities of modern life—a life that suffers 'between the fell incensed points of mighty opposites' and dies in silence,—a life that is summarised to perfection in the following lines of de la Mare, which could have easily been written by W. B. Yeats :

O burden of life that is  
A livelong tangle of perplexities !

( 'Vain Questioning' )

De la Mare is typically a modern who sees the restlessness of modern life. The poet views life sadly engaged in the mazes of distraction, confusion, fear and anxiety. To him also man is the measure of all things. Here it would be pertinent to refer to what Louis Macneice states in connection with modern poetry : European poetry now seems to be steadily returning towards the Greek tradition—"The proper study of Mankind is Man".<sup>5</sup> The restlessness of modern man is a striking and common note in many of de la Mare's poems like 'Haunted', 'Vain Questioning', 'A Riddle' and 'Hour-Glass'. The poet realises how this restlessness is due to the burden and perplexities of modern life, due to dissatisfaction arising out of his unfulfilled hopes and also due to his constant war with the opposite forces of life. Incidentally, it may be noted that the idea in de la Mare's line 'such was thy constant hope, and this thy way ?' ( 'Vain Questioning' )—that our achievements fall short of our ideas or efforts has been powerfully expressed by T. S. Eliot in his lines in 'The Hollow Men' :

Between the idea  
And the reality  
Between the motion  
And the act  
Falls the Shadow.

The picture of man de la Mare depicts in his poem 'Haunted' is indeed the picture of the modern man who is restless and has his heart divided. The poet asks

But thou, O man, what rest hast thou ?  
 Thy emptiest solitude can bring  
 Only a subtler questioning  
 In thy divided heart.

( 'Haunted' )

In de la Mare's poem 'A prayer' the romantic conception of this world of ideal beauty and glory is set off against a world 'grieved, ugly, wicked or dull'. The same poet who keeps himself busy with his flirtation with phantoms and fairies is also aware of 'poor clay-cold humanity' and the yearning of 'a heart at passion with life's endless coil'. ('Hour-Glass') The poet's bitter realization of the painful side of man's life has humanized his soul. That is why human beauty is to him 'a sight to sadden rather than delight'. The poet's melancholy is not mere wistfulness of human anguish. It is the result of experience deeply felt in the heart. Thus it is also the stuff of human life of which de la Mare's poetry is made. This shows his avowed interest in man, a characteristic which the romantic poet shares with the modern. Poems like 'Old Susan', 'Old Ben', 'Blind Boy', 'Miss Loo', 'The Tailor' and 'The Slum Child' illustrate de la Mare's deep interest in the common man whose cause has been specially championed by the less orthodox poets of our times.

This note of humanism, which lends a distinctively modern character to his poetry, is expressed in de la Mare's broad sympathy for bruised hearts. The poet's sympathy for a fat woman, pale and barren, becomes eloquent in touching lines. Only the poet knows the secret of her sorrows, the pain of barrenness :

Enormous those childless breasts :  
 God in His pity knows  
 Why, in her bodice stuck,  
 Reeks a mock rose.

( 'The Fat Woman' )

The poems entitled "The Slum Child" and "The Blind Boy" are born out of de la Mare's human kindness. The wordless woes of the young slum child find in the poet their sole voice :

In leafless Summer's stench and noise  
 I'd sit and play  
 With others as lean-faced girls and boys,  
 And sticks and stones for toys — ...  
 Then up the noisome stairs I'd creep  
 For food and rest,  
 Or, empty-bellied, lie, and weep  
 My wordless woes to sleep. ( 'The Slum Child' )

It would be particularly relevant here to refer to the observation of Kenneth Hopkins: 'The secret that has given de la Mare his hold on two generations of readers lies...in humanity, in compassion'.<sup>6</sup>

Modern poetry has been described as the instrument of precise psychology. This we find finely illustrated in de la Mare's realistic poem, 'Dry August burned'. The poem, rich in human significance, shows the terrible and dehumanising impact of militarism on life. The incident, which the poet presents, is a fit case for the study of psychological exploration. The sight of a harvest hare lying limp on the kitchen table, 'its fur blood-blubbered, eyes astare', at first moves the heart of a small child who stands near by. The child deeply moved, weeps out her heart to see it there. Then her mind undergoes a change. The cause of the change of mind is her sight of a team of field artillery. The poet describes the incident and the psychological reaction in the child:

She watched the sun-tanned soldiery,

... ..

And then—the wonder and tumult gone—

Stood nibbling a green leaf, alone,

Her dark eyes, dreaming...she turned, and ran,

Elf-like, into the house again.

The hare had vanished... 'Mother, she said,

Her tear-stained cheek now flushed with red,

'Please, may I go and see it skinned ?

('Dry August burned')

The psychological realism of de la Mare owes a great deal to Thomas Hardy, whose *Dynasts* is regarded as a landmark in modern English poetry. Had de la Mare been a mere belated romantic, he would not have been an admirer of Hardy or influenced by him. The inconclusiveness of some of de la Mare's poems and stories may also be noted here. This lack of finality is an essential feature of modern art. (One has only to think of some of the stories of Chekhov, Lawrence and Katherine Mansfield, to name only three writers). And de la Mare can make this inconclusiveness of his poems infinitely suggestive. Take, for instance, his poem, 'The Railway Junction'. Its significance, when studied sensitively, is greatly enriched if we consider it in relation to Robert Frost's celebrated poem, 'The Road Not Taken',

Some of the representative specimens of modern English poetry have animals for their themes. The poems of D.H. Lawrence deserve special mention in this connection. G.K. Chesterton writes on the donkey. Dorothy Wellesley poetises exhaustively on horses. De la Mare also has written a number of animal poems including one on a hare and

one on a donkey, Nicholas Nye, whose spokesman he is. Filled with the thoughts of Nicholas Nye the poet discovers :

But a wonderful gumption was under his skin,  
And a clear calm light in his eye,  
And once in a while : he'd smile...

Would Nicholas Nye.

(‘Nicholas Nye’)

This note of compassion, which certainly explains de la Mare's modernity of appeal, is explicit in the ironical poem, ‘Hi’ :

Hi I handsome hunting man

Fire your little gun

Bang ! Now the animal

Is dead and dumb and done.

Nevermore to peep again, creep again, leap again

Eat or sleep or drink again, Oh, what fun !

De la Mare, like the poets of this age has concerned himself deeply with the problem of man's lost Innocence, faith, peace and love. In the poem ‘The Tryst’ he seeks for the lost man ‘Changeless vague of peace’.

No, no. Nor earth, nor air, nor fire, nor deep

Could lull poor mortal longingness asleep.

Somewhere there Nothing is ; and there lost Man

Shall win what changeless vague of peace he can.

(‘The Tryst’)

In ‘The Exile’, the poet makes Adam want to enrobe himself ‘again’ in lost nakedness’ and re-welcome Eve to Heaven's nothingness. It would be pertinent here to refer to the parable which de la Mare writes as Introduction to his anthology ‘Come Hither’. Here de la Mare wants to express the truth that joy, which only innocent happiness can give can be attained in the garden of Eden, the heaven of man's imagination.

The universality of human experience, which de la Mare's poetry often implies, also lends modernity to it. This poetry about the universality of human experience is termed by H. C. Duffin, as the poetry of truth. It would be also relevant here to quote the words of W.H. Auden ; ‘De la Mare's poems are neither satirical, nor occasional ; indeed, I cannot recall coming across in his work a single Proper Name, whether of a person, or a place, which one could identify as a real historical name.’<sup>7</sup> These truths are based on timeless things like transience of life, beauty, death, time, God and Man and the renewed apprehensions of the common things of life. Such truths have no less appeal to the modern man. The poet, haunted by the shadow of death, reveals the truth how death is ‘a provocative stimulus to man's imagination’ :

The loveliest thing earth hath, a shadow hath,  
A dark and livelong hint of death,  
Haunting it ever till its last faint breath...

(*'Shadow'*)

In the poem "When the rose is faded" the poet arrives at the truth how dead beauty remains alive in memory. In 'All That's Past', which is one of his famous ruminative poems, there is the poet's renewed discovery how past and present merge into eternity. As a passionate lover of beauty de la Mare has a nostalgic longing for the fleeing beauties. But the poet discovers the truth that the beauties do not pass completely into nothingness. They pass into a stream, a perpetuity. Even those who watch them pass into a perpetuity. So the poet bids us watch wistfully the lovely things for the last time :

Look thy last on all things lovely

(*'Fare Well'*)

These truths often appear as the maxims of a wise philosopher. The poem entitled 'The Familiar' reveals the poet's realisation of a vital truth. It is the cry of the modern man who echoes and re-echoes such feelings in his earth-bound life :

"Peace not on earth have I found,  
Yet to earth am resigned."

(*'The Familiar'*)

De la Mare lends a touch of eternity to his poem 'The Scribe'. Here he treats a great theme—God, Man and Universe. The poet speaks of his utter inability to record God's measureless wonders. This belief, which Duffin calls de la Mare's 'rare theism', may be the expression of any man of any age. The enigma behind the lovely things, 'the Earth's wonders' that His hand has made, has naturally baffled the poet. This is the theme that kindled Hopkins's religious fervour. Hopkins finds the revelation of God's glory in the pied beauty, 'the dappled things' which are 'lovely things' to de la Mare. In the long poem 'Winged Chariot' de la Mare is preoccupied with time. He meditates on time that is ever-fleeting :

Jasmine, and hyacinth, the briar rose  
Steep with their presence a whole night ; nor close :  
Time with an infinite gentleness through them flows.

(*'Winged Chariot'*)

While commenting on these poems of reflection Duffin shows how George Barker, the modern Irish poet, writes on the passing moments and Louis Macneice writes on life's illusions. This Duffin does to show de la Mare's affinity with them. The following observation of Douglas



Bush, made on the poetry of Spender, Lewis and Macneice may be fittingly applied to the meditative poems of de la Mare: 'However significant their revolutionary writing, their poems early or late, that exist most fully and securely as poetry are probably those slighter pieces in which angry reporting has given place to a richer density of suggestion, to quiet evocations of cherished scenes and moments, to distilled meditations on time and life and death, to warm recognition of everyday humanity'.<sup>8</sup> In such poems which show his complete freedom from romantic traditionalism, de la Mare is maturely wise. While admiring de la Mare's poetry, W H. Auden says: 'De la Mare continued to mature both in technique and wisdom till the day of his death'.<sup>9</sup>

Auden thinks that de la Mare has been shabbily treated by anthologists. Hermann Peschmann in the introduction to his book, 'The Voice of Poetry' writes: 'No anthology of any decade since 1920 would be representative without his (de la Mare's) inclusion'.<sup>10</sup> The brooding poems which are de la Mare's impressions of truth will certainly express the moods of men of all ages and deserve a place in all representative anthologies of modern poetry. They constitute his poetry of unaging delight. De la Mare's accurate grasp of human relation, his appreciation of life, show how he can even see at the other end of the romantic spectrum. It can therefore be safely concluded that de la Mare is not only a romantic traditionalist but also a realist, a modernist whose poetry can be significantly studied in relation to contemporary life.

#### EDITORIAL NOTE

There is a significant observation on de la Mare's poetry in *Selected Letters of Robert Frost* ed. Lawrance Thompson (Holt, Rinehart New York, 1964) ;—

[Frost's comment on 'The Enchanted Hill' by de la Mare : ] This seems ineffectual. But the author is the one man we are all agreed to praise here. His 'The Listeners' is the best poem since the century came in. He is hardly of the fashion, which makes it the stranger that he is so much honored. Earns his living by reading manuscripts for a publisher.

[ This was written about 15 December, 1913 ]

A. Bose

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# SHAW, BRECHT AND BOLT : TREATMENT OF A THEME

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BEDASRUTI DAS

## I

A genius often remains unacknowledged in his or her own age. The inevitable fate of an individual who stands in opposition to an established authority has been brilliantly poised by Charles in Shaw's *Saint Joan*, when Joan's rehabilitation as a saint is complete : "If you could bring her back to life, they would burn her again within six months, for all their present adoration of her" (Epilogue). Yet from time to time the world does not fail to offer some such individuals of singular strength and virtue, who press hard to liberate themselves from environmental limitations. The present discussion will concern three such characters ; Shaw's Joan, Brecht's Galileo and Bolt's Thomas More. All these characters are trapped in some superimposed limitations, but their respective situations are different : Joan's revolutionary ideas not only meet with a conflict with the Church authority but they also attack the existing political and social concepts indirectly ; Galileo's scientific ideas shatter the Ptolemaic concept of the universe accepted by the Church and at the same time rouse the common people to explore truth following the track of doubt (which becomes a threat to the bureaucratic set-up of society) ; Thomas More's strict adherence to his principles and the decision of the Pope, the highest authority of the Church of Rome, rouses the fury of the King who is inclined to defy the Pope's decision and thereby to break away from the Papal authority.

Bernard Shaw presents Joan as a genius. In the Preface he writes, "A genius is a person who, seeing further and probing deeper than other people, has a different set of ethical valuations from theirs, and has energy enough to give effect to this extra vision and its valuations in whatever manner best suits his or her specific talents". Even though Joan is a simple country maid, she is an untutored but gifted genius of exceptional intellectual vivacity and powerful intuitions. Her genius cultivated mainly in masculine departments such as 'soldiering and politics'. With a mild satire on the present-day educated women, Shaw esteems Joan highly. "She understood the political and military situation

in France much better than most of our newspaper-fed university women-graduates understand the corresponding situation of their own country today". But, as Joan was born and brought up in a rural environment, completely devoid of intellectual awareness and full of orthodox beliefs, she failed to understand the true source of her wisdom. She possessed such a vivid imagination that the fruitful, novel ideas came to her as an audible voice, which she mistakenly understood to have come from some visionary saints ; that is, she was absolutely unaware of herself, of her potentialities as a genius.

Brecht's Galileo also is a genius ; he is a scientist, a pursuer of truth. But, unlike Joan, he was fully aware of his potentialities. He lived and worked in places which were intellectually alive. Formerly he was the professor of Mathematics in the University of Padua and later he went to the Florentine court which accommodated a number of famous scholars of the time. His intellect had never been clouded by orthodox beliefs ; the truth he explored through scientific investigations remained unsullied by the existing theological ideas. He was violently opposed to any irrational compromise and stuck firmly to his own conviction and for that he did not even hesitate to go against the popular concept of God :

Sagredo : So that there are only stars there !—And where then is God ?

Galileo : What do you mean ?

Sagredo : God ! Where is God ?

Galileo angrily : Not there ! Any more than he could be found on earth, if there were beings up there and they were to seek him here !

Sagredo : Then where is God ?

Galileo : Am I a theologian ? I am a mathematician.

Sagredo : First and foremost, you are a man. And I ask you, Where is God in your universe ?

Galileo : In us or nowhere.'

Nothing existed beyond Galileo's clear scientific vision. Any attempt to blur this vision met with violent resistance. His tremendous self-consciousness kept him aware of his individual self and his place in society.

Bolt's More 'is a man of an angel's wit and singular learning', writes Robert Whittinton. He sincerely committed himself to the Church of Rome and strictly adhered to the principles laid by the Church authority. As he was aware of his limited power and authority, he shrank into a world of his own where he considered his place supreme. His sharp legal mind could clearly distinguish the range of Royal

authority and that of his own. Standing as a representative figure of the Church he remained unbent to the king's unjust wish for an illegal divorce.

## II

*Commonsense* defines these characters. In *Saint Joan*, when the Archbishop states that the voice of God comes only to the Church Militant and that the voices which came to Joan were the echoes of her own wilfulness, Joan replies with great assertion, "It was you that as good as said my voices lied. When have they ever lied? If you will not believe in them: even if they are only the echoes of my own commonsense, are they not always right? and are not your earthly counsels always wrong?" (Act V) When the little Monk conveys to Galileo the confirmatory declaration of Father Clavius regarding the truth of his discoveries, Galileo exclaims, "It has won! Not I but *commonsense* won!"

In *A Man for All Seasons*, the Steward speaks to the audience about the excessive generosity of his master, Thomas More. But he says that his master does not want to part with something; that is, his *commonsense*: "There must be something that he wants to keep, That's only *Commonsense*". (Act One).

In the Oxford English Dictionary, the word commonsense has been defined as "an internal sense which was regarded as the common bond or centre of the five senses, in which the various impressions received were reduced to the unity of a common consciousness". It is probably with this shade of meaning that the word 'Commonsense' has been used to give adequate dimension to these characters. But, even when a common word is employed to ascribe to the true identity of the characters they greatly differ because of the respective states of affairs and their individual approaches to it.

Untutored Joan possesses a greater clarity of vision than the learned diplomats of Charles's court to understand thoroughly the socio-political situation of her country. She owes her wisdom almost entirely to her commonsense. The novelty in Joan's humanitarian ideas, fruits of her commonsense, shatters the then existing order in society. Her ideas meet in direct clash with the feudal system and the authoritarian stability of the Church. Homer E. Woodbridge clearly states Joan's situation: "To Stogumber Joan is a witch, because she has beaten the English; to Warwick she must be destroyed because she has appealed directly to kings over the heads of the great nobles; to Cauchon she is a dangerous heretic whose cult threatens the very life of the Church".<sup>1</sup> Joan is unusually naive in worldly experiences,

Her immature practical sense fails her miserably in coping with the crude, materialistic affairs of life and she cannot find an escape from the impending tragic disaster. Joan's pride, extreme self-confidence and lack of requisite understanding of human nature, indeed, become the vital flaws in her character. Without having the slightest idea of the possible direful results, she unhesitatingly offends almost everyone and thereby turns her friends into enemies. People loved and praised Joan because of her simplicity and potentialities but despised her for her naked offensive attitude to others. If Joan had learnt to be a little more tolerant in human relationship, she could possibly avoid the tragic doom.

Unlike Joan's, Galileo's commonsense has been accompanied by a mature understanding of the worldly courses of life. He possesses such flexibility of character that he is capable of acclimatizing himself to any circumstance. Martin Esslin rightly points out, "Like Sartre and Camus, Brecht saw man determined by his social environment, his personality the mere product of changing outside circumstances." Galileo, indeed, is such a Brechtian man. But he has a fixed end in life from which he never deviates; his individual self, stands high above the circumstantial bondage though he accepts the bondage temporarily. Let us consider some problems with which he had to contend as a scientist. Initially we find him as a Professor of Mathematics in the University of Padua. Here he enjoys greater freedom in liberal research work than in any other place, but material insufficiency becomes an insurmountable handicap. Whereas the Florentine court solves his pecuniary problem with the possible danger of great restriction over his research work by the Church authority. Galileo prefers the Florentine court as it would liberate him with ample material opportunities and for this purpose he writes to the Duke of Florence in flattering words that go far below his self-dignity. This action makes him a victim of piercing critical strictures. But a sensible analysis will lead us to a plausible justification for his decision; for him liberation of the intellect is more significant than self-dignity.

Another great decisive moment appears before Galileo when he is to declare his investigated ideas as false or to embrace death. He rejects the second alternative, for, it would put an end to his unfinished work—*Discorsi*—the fruit of his life-long suffering and undeviated dedication of life. His choice is for the first alternative. The decision is sensible because it, at least, keeps open the future possibilities to finish his work. Such worldly abuses like shame, disrespect do not affect him greatly. He consciously takes the decision and he has enough

strength to bear the responsibility on his own shoulders. Mr Gunter Rohrmoser almost accurately states Galileo's situation : "The arrangement and execution of the play permit us to interpret Galileo's behaviour in recanting under pressure from the inquisition in the sense of a rational cunning, which accommodates itself to the powerful only formally and seemingly, in order to be able to undermine their authority more effectively. For the fact that Galileo does not fear death under all circumstances, indeed, is ready to face it if the execution of his experiments requires it, is proved by his attitude during the plague ; he passionately continues his experiments despite constant mortal danger' !<sup>8</sup> So, we see, Galileo succeeded in reaching his goal as he understood his environmental limitations well and acted accordingly. Apparently Galileo seems to be a coward, a man without self-dignity, but a penetrating study of his character will lead us to the fact that he is not what he seems to be. His is the potentially strong mind which prepares its way through the temporary phases of insult and shame and is ultimately crowned with success. Galileo remains despised by the scholars of his time for cowardice, but becomes a mighty intellectual force to the succeeding generation as he successfully smuggles his work to Holland.

Thomas More is maturer in his understanding of the complex structure of society compared to Joan the Maid ; he takes all legal precautions, owing to his commonsense, to defend himself from the unjust blow from royal authority. But he lacks Galileo's unbiased practical morality which successfully confronts the crooked cunning of a corrupt and hostile society. He ultimately becomes a victim of such a society because of his idealistic and stubborn adherence to principles which pay nothing in the end. For, history records the tragic fate of his idealism after the separation of the royal authority from the Church.

Unlike Joan, More is the affectionate father of an intelligent girl, a sympathetic master and a loving husband ; in a word, he maintains a normal life. The sufferings due to the burden of his idealistic commitment have been partly shared by the other members of his family. Even when he suffers terribly in the prison alone, Alice's caressing warmth in words and feeling brings strength to this critical moment of his life. It is extremely difficult to omit any part of the following conversation to substantiate this point :

More : Now listen, you must leave the country. All of you must leave the country.

Margaret : And leave you here ?

More : It makes no difference, Meg ; they won't let you see

me again. (Breathlessly, a prepared speech under pressure).  
You must all go on the same day, but not on the same boat,  
different boats from different ports—

Margaret : After the trial, then.

More : There'll be no trial, they have no case. Do this for me.  
I beseech you.

Margaret : Yes.

More : Alice ? (She turns her back). Alice, I command it !

Alice (*harshly*) : Right !

Alice : I'll tell you what I'm afraid of : that when you've gone,  
I shall hate you for it.

More : (*turns from her : his face working*) : Well, you mustn't,  
Alice, that's all. (*Swiftly she crosses the stage to him ; he  
turns and they clasp each other fiercely*). You mustn't You—

Alice : ( *Covers his mouth with her hand* ) ; S-s-sh..... As for  
understanding, I understand you're the best man that I ever  
met or am likely to ; and if you go—well God knows why I  
suppose—though as God's my witness, God's kept deadly  
quiet about it ! And if anyone wants my opinion of the king or  
his Council they've only to ask for it !

More : Why, it's a lion I married ! A lion ! (*He breaks away  
from her, his face shining.*)

The conversation reflects how organic the bond of genuine human relationship is. But, unfortunately, in *Saint Joan* this is almost lacking. Joan stands alone ; she is left with nothing but a chimeric spiritual vision. Such a strong bond of relationship is also lacking between Galileo and his family. He remains isolated in his world of creative activities and probably his need of such a relationship is sublimated in the joy of his creative attainment.

### III

So far I have discussed the characters in their relative situations. The concluding section will be devoted to the final phase of their lives. Joan finally meets with two alternatives—death or life-imprisonment. It is not so much because of her religious fervour than her passion for a free life that she chooses the first alternative. This becomes evident when she basely recants and again takes back the recantation :

"You think that life is nothing but not being stone dead. It is not the bread and water I fear : I can live on bread : when have I asked for more ? It is no hardship to drink water if the water be clean. Bread has no sorrow for me, and water no affliction. But to shut me



from the light of the sky and the sight of the fields and flowers ; to chain my feet so that I can never again ride with the soldier nor climb the hills ; to make me breathe foul damp darkness, and keep from me everything that brings me back to the love of God when your wickedness and foolishness tempt me to hate him : all this is worse than the furnace in the Bible that was heated seven times."

Thomas More's faith in justice does not hold in the end. He realizes it, but still rigidly adheres to his decision. In his moral principles he seeks the worth of his life and calmly bears all afflictions. Death, to him is a mere incident in the process. However, both Joan and More are given the stature of heroic 'heroes', since they heroically confront the tragic end of their lives. But the question still remains unanswered—do their deaths pay worthwhile compensations ? Galileo, on the other hand, has been depicted as an unheroic 'hero'. He refuses to embrace death simply to prove himself right when his work is still unfinished. He prolongs a shameful and despised life, but he does it with a purpose. For him, life has its only relevance on the earth and he is determined to fulfil his earthly responsibility as a scientist by finishing his worthy work—*Discorsi*. He does it. In Galileo's world, the concept of a hero is absent : "Unhappy is the country that needs a hero," But ironically, this unheroic 'hero' probably outshines the heroic 'heroes', and is most successful in fulfilling his mission by passing the limitations strongly imposed upon him by Established Authority.

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## A NOTE ON HUXLEY'S *TEXTS AND PRETEXTS*

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SUNIL KANTI SEN

In academic circles Huxley is hardly recognized as a serious literary critic but it should be obvious to any casual reader of Huxley that his interest in literature, both in the craft of literature and its social and other bearings, had been wide-ranging. Perhaps his irrepressible levity and journalistic wit that seem to trivialize his utterances prevent us from taking a serious look at his critical essays. The Introduction to *Texts and Pretexts* is characteristic of his style. He had an almost morbid fear of appearing pedantic to his readers; hence his flippancy and a hurried and elliptical manner. With a few notable exceptions where the tone is more serious than playful—his introduction to the Letters of Lawrence or the essay on Wordsworth, most of his numerous critical essays are haunted by a spectre looking askance at the whole business of literature as a serious preoccupation. And the spectre had the last word in *Island*. 'Literature is incompatible with everything except dualism, criminal lunacy, impossible aspirations and unnecessary guilts'. It may still be worthwhile to take a close look at his essays and the many aphoristic utterances with which his novels are overlaid and try to find out if any coherent pattern of critical attitudes emerges in spite of his irritating tricks of style. A close scrutiny of his *Texts and Pretexts* may serve as a useful starting point.

The Introduction to *Texts and Pretexts* published in 1932 begins with the metaphor of 'fiddling while Rome burns'. He defends an 'intelligent interest' in fiddling as a prophylactic against burning. The metaphor has an unconscious irony, for late in his career he seemed to repudiate literature as fiddling. His interest in art stems from his concern for good life; for, art, he says, imitates life. Here he turns a Wilde epigram on its head. He remembers Arnold when he remarks that with the decline of religion the social importance of art increases. There is another Arnoldian echo when he prescribes a slow and careful reading of the 'comparatively few books' written by men who 'thought and felt with style'—the best which has been thought and said in the world. The great poetry of the past has not dated and his aim, he

says, has been to decode past experiences in modern terms. He frankly states his preferences. Swinburne's rhetoric leaves him cold and he has little patience with the imprecision and prolixity of Shelley's poetry. 'I like things to be said with precision and as concisely as possible.' Arnold in his 1853 Preface prescribed the same norms for poetry—'particular, precise and firm' representation of feelings.

Huxley's approach to poetry is implicit in the method of grouping most of the texts in terms of their themes. This leaves out a great body of good poetry which defies the simple question, *What is this poem about?* This theme-approach may also lead to a serious distortion of the meaning or intention of a poem. Take for instance the excerpts grouped under the theme *Polygamy*.

True love in this differs from gold and clay,  
That to divide is not to take away.  
Love is like understanding, that grows bright  
Gazing on many truths;

Huxley's tart comment that this is one way of asserting a predilection for polygamy may be good psychology but this is not literary criticism. His tongue-in-the-cheek defence of polygamy—'Good artists are, as a rule, indifferent monogamists'—and a cleverly argued paragraph on how monogamy means emotional responsibilities which cramp a genuine artist's desire for emotional free-lancing are utterly irrelevant to a critical approach to poetry. The excerpts under '*Old Age*' will further illustrate the absurdities of this method. After quoting the last verse-paragraph of Arnold's *Dover Beach* beginning

Ah, love, let us be true  
To one another

he makes the fatuous comment that love is the last defence against old age. Arnold was thirty when he composed *Dover Beach*. It would seem that the texts Huxley has chosen are so many pretexts for making his own observations, mostly flippant, on life and literature. Under *Desire* he quotes a memorable poem, *Western Wind* written by an anonymous poet.

Western wind, when wilt thou blow,  
The small rain down can rain?  
Christ, if my love were in my arms,  
And I in my bed again!

There is no comment on the intense lyricism of the first three lines and the subtle shift in the fourth line. With this he groups poems (or excerpts) by Tennyson, Wyatt, Shakespeare, Carew, Browning, Gautier

and Milton and the short commentary appended to them is a witty observation on the contemporary attitude to long hair romanticized by the earlier poets. Long hair has come back since Huxley wrote his commentary.

The samples collected under *Right True End* are yet another instance of Huxley's anarchical taste. That he should choose a wicked phrase of Donne is no surprise. Huxley's curious love-and-hate-attitude towards concupiscence is well-known. But to group together Donne's *Loves Progress* and *Exstasie* and suggest by implication that both of these poems are about 'the centrique part' is to betray an amazing insensitivity of mind. And his comment that Donne illustrates the danger of being too well educated repeats the old charge first voiced by Johnson. Perhaps it is an indirect confession that he finds his own learning too intractable to be dramatized into literature.

There are, however, evidences that he is not always an elegant trifler. He quotes with approval Cleveland's outrageously playful lines :

Why does my she-advowson fly  
Incumbency ?

and adds a sensible note on the nature of metaphysical concls. His short note on *Obscurity in Poetry* is in the manner of Johnson—a fine specimen of balanced judgment. He has the Augustan habit of avoiding the rapturous phrase without, of course, the cool assurance of an Augustan critic who lived in a well-ordered universe with the 'place' of man finally defined in the chain of being and the canons of art firmly laid down by the ancients. Huxley says dolefully in the Introduction that in the present anarchical state of culture a critic should be content 'to go on piping up for reason and realism and a certain decency'. Yet there are evidences that Huxley responded to those qualities of poetry which would have repelled an Augustan mind. Under the section *Magic* he quotes one Mallarmé sonnet as an 'unflawed piece of pure poetry' and Poe's *City in the Sea* as a sustained spell. He is also keenly responsive to the analogical quality of poetry. 'Every good metaphor is the mating of irrelevancies to produce a new and more vivid expression'. It is, however, evident from his general approach to poetry that he rejected the aesthetics of Poe and Pater.

In *Texts and Pretexts* Huxley seldom considers a whole poem as an autonomous thing nor does he make a close attack on the text. His method of sample-testing—a poor method of explication—is as fallacious as Arnold's touchstone method of judging new poetry. From a remark he made about his response to Shelley's poetry—'Shelley's effects are mainly cumulative, and I lack the patience to let them accumulate'—it

would seem that his mind lacked the critical discipline to allow a whole poem to settle in his mind and it darted like that of Johnson who 'loved to read poetry, but hardly ever read any poem to an end'. Hence he avoided the close reading method of Empson. He was rather with Arnold in his idiosyncratic moral preoccupation and a genuine concern for literature as an instrument of culture.

In the note appended to the closing section *Conclusions* Huxley drops his levity and attempts to state in general terms his views on what is valuable in religion, theology and art. It is indeed difficult to follow the exact curve of his arguments for he never uses well-defined critical terms to examine the nature of art. Most theologies, he says, are based on rationalizations of feelings and his reference to *Pippa's Song* has the oblique hint that poetry too derives from feelings rationalized and he underscores the danger that like theology poetry also may lead to 'quagmires of error': Religion, if accepted as a system of make-believe, can serve as an aid to good living. Poetry gives us certain 'feelings about experience' which may be vague or numinous but it can be valuable if its own conventions of make-believe are consciously accepted by the reader. Phrases like 'feelings about experience' or 'rationalizations of feeling' hardly define his aesthetics but his concern for good living places him in the central tradition of English literary criticism.

# JOYCE CARY'S FIRST TRILOGY

## A STUDY OF HIS TECHNIQUE

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BIMALENDU MAJUMDAR

In reading out the famous Clarke Lectures, Cary once remarked that the form of a book, page by page, was not *the book, the work of art*. He argued that the separate chapters did not have a complete significance until the whole work was known. He called the book a total symbol. "It is richer than the parts and actually different from them", said he<sup>1</sup>. In writing his famous first trilogy Cary clearly improved upon his own thesis. *Herself Surprised*, the first book of the trilogy, is the story of Sara Monday. She is a country girl, comes to the Monday family and accepts the position of a cook. Mathew Monday, the dominating figure of the family, falls in love with Sara and marries her. Despite social disparity she pulls along well, but there grows a brief affair with Hickson, a millionaire friend of Mathew Monday. After Hickson's death she becomes the mistress of Gulley Jimson, an artist, but the relationship does not mature into marriage when she learns that he has a wife. Eventually Gulley Jimson leaves her and she goes to work as a cook at Tolbrook, the family estate of Thomas Wilcher, a famous lawyer. Here she is caught stealing from the Wilcher home by one of his niece and for this serves a long term of imprisonment. Sara Monday writes her story from the prison and earns money. *To Be A Pilgrim*, the second one of these related novels, begins where *Herself Surprised* ends. It is the story of Thomas Wilcher who is now seventy years old. The story falls into three parts. In the first part Wilcher, the retired lawyer is seen living at Tolbrook under the eye of his niece Ann, and he undertakes to write a journal. The immediate problem for him is to escape the restraint of his niece, and run and rejoin Sara. Sara is expected to be free in one year's time, and Wilcher wishes to marry his mistress, Sara. Wilcher is a conservative. In the second part he meets his niece Ann, a doctor and her husband Robert, a farmer. Both of them are members of the new younger generation. Wilcher tries to frustrate Robert's attempts to modernise agriculture. In the third part Wilcher lives a life of adventure, a life of pilgrimage in soul, and forsakes comfort. Unlike his elder brother Edward, or his soldier brother Bill, he has too deep a faith and now he consciously relives the past

and explores his relations with his parents and sisters in order to discover the sources of their strength and failure. The *Horse's Mouth* closes the trilogy of novels. It centres round the fictional artist Gulley Jimson and the persons connected with him, Sara and Wilcher. In the beginning of the book Gulley has just been freed from prison, and he walks along the Thames. Gulley is a spiritual descendant of William Blake and creates works of imaginative grandeur. The world of creation is a world of injustice, and also a world of affection. Nosy Barbon, a lover of art, comes out determined to protect him. Another friend, Walter Oller, a postman, offers him coffee in the morning. He remembers the story of his relationship with Sara, and for him she stands as a feminine principle in life. The novel ends with a masterly narrative in which Jimson and his young disciples desperately and furiously paint a wall of a building. But the demolition of the wall has already begun. Gulley ignores the noise and dust and keeps on painting and creating and finally he is hauled away in a police van. The impression left by the trilogy is, however, greater than that created by each book taken separately. The trilogy offers a panorama of English life and by reflecting the viewpoints of each other, the Sara-Wilcher-Jimson story becomes richer in human understanding. Sara Monday, Thomas Wilcher and Gulley Jimson are slaves to their own subjectivities, and the trilogy is a saga of their isolation and imprisonment in a world where they used to enjoy full freedom.

Let us try to work out the difference between the contents of this trilogy and its contents as a finished product of art, and in that way alone it is possible to have a satisfying appraisal of the technique employed.

Each novel is written in the first person. In the prefatory essay especially written for *The Horse's Mouth*, the third and the last of a set of three, Cary claimed, "Every living soul creates his own world, and must do so.....It is a solitary mind from the beginning. It feels loves, it feels sympathy but it does its thinking by itself. It has to create a three-dimensional universe for itself in its own imagination....." (p 8). The basic plan of the tripartite structure of this trilogy is increasingly felt right from the reading of *Herself Surprised*, the first volume of these related novels. This is the story of Sara Monday, Wilcher's housekeeper who marries Jimson. Sara, Wilcher, and Jimson appear in each of these novels. Sara's subdued sympathy for Gulley Jimson is palpably apparent in the pages of *Herself Surprised*. She records how Jimson would only sit and stare or follow her about the kitchen and how stupid Jimson was as any man in the state, quite hang-dog with love (p 71). Here is an estimate of Jimson drawn up by Sara. Yet another

account of Sara, this time by Gulley Jimson, has been outlined in *The Horse's Mouth*. Jimson appeared at Sara's door and found it was new painted. He thought it was Sara all over and the door knob was a clear proof that Sara was for cleaning and washing (p 32). Sara, however, appeared differently to Wilcher in *To Be A Pilgrim*. Wilcher discovered how strong and rich a fountain of grace played not only in the energy of her religious observance, but in everything she did, and in her most casual remark (p320). And how does Sara appear to herself? The answer is found in *Herself Surprised*. She was surprised at herself when, after a month, she received a letter from Gulley Jimson saying that he wanted her to come to him in London and she did not want to leave Tolbrook (p 135). Sara's life covers the entire trilogy and she is surprised at herself, surprised to find herself doing what she least expected to do. The trilogy thus gains strength and freshness from the way of looking at each other in dissimilar circumstances with proper distance and detachment.

Let us suppose that I am looking at a tree; I then become aware of another person looking at the scene which includes both the tree and myself. The whole situation is now altered. I am not simply myself, *pour-soi*, but I am also aware that I exist as a Self for the Other<sup>3</sup>. Likewise Sara, Wilcher and Jimson are individually not simply their own selves but each exists for the other too. To the advantage of tripartite division is added Cary's of continuous present tense as an artful narrative device. Perhaps because of the quality of composition like this, and more certainly for his view of life, Cary has often been labelled as an existentialist. Cary's attempt to come to terms with existence itself, makes him unmistakably modern .....in the sense that Proust and Joyce and Mann are modern<sup>4</sup>. But it will be generally admitted that, existentialism as a view of life and character can be interpreted with varying degrees of aesthetic consequences. The theory suffers from an inherent contradiction. In terms of Sartre's theory the trilogy should be a transcendent object, free and gratuitous; but at the same time it demands free play of the reader's subjectivity if it is to exist at all. These claims are mutually incompatible.

When we speak of technique, we speak of nearly everything. For technique is the means by which the writer's experience, which is his subject matter, compels him to attend to it<sup>4</sup>. Cary does accomplish this act of discovering, exploring, and developing the themes of the trilogy with marvellous ease and effortlessness. The use of a few fond images arrests our attention. Woodview was Sara Monday's house. It stood two miles out at the green. The house was very pretty,



and all covered with trellis in front, and there were roses and creepers behind. It had a good garden too, especially a good kitchen garden with fresh vegetables (pp 11-12, *Herself Surprised*). Next he dwells on Tolbrook Manor, a house with good rooms and very good furniture. It was a rambling kind of place in a field with ha-ha fence. The gardens were behind and the field in front and outside there were meadows and hedges (p 112, *ibid*). They have been drawn in the manner of Dunamara, a house associated with the memory of Evelyn Corner in *A House of Children*. One can trace their *genre* to The Cedar, a house to which Charley Brown, the protagonist of *Charley Is My Darling* often returned and found a ready shelter. Or, are they in any way different from the Red Lion where Gully Jimson and the other artists often went and drank beer or the Eagle where Lolie was frequently seen drinking a glass of beer with her ostrich feathers shaking in the breeze (pp 204, 207 & 281—*The Horse's Mouth*)? In the images of these houses a garden is almost always a constant confronted by variables in scenes and setting. The inherent qualities of these houses may be sharply limited but Cary deftly exploits our willingness to accept these objects as symbols and there grows the habit of attaching certain meanings and emotional responses to them. Thus Tolbrook Manor, in *To Be A Pilgrim*, as a house may be a perfect hole, damp and droughty (p 10), but it is one which appears to Wilcher like a magic island, preserved in peace among the storms of the world (p 160), a house which has been preserved by a succession of miracles and hence reigns in timelessness and changelessness. Woodview, Dunamara, The Cedar, and Tolbrook Manor, selected at random, have the power to evoke, through association, thoughts and feelings which are really greater than the terms connoted by them individually and literally. In addition, Cary creates some impression by the use of imagery of the cat. Towards the close of *Herself Surprised* Sara says, "I was all in the moment, like a dog or a cat, and indeed, I suppose it is nature to be so" (p 213). Wilcher's mother's cat, Grey, is a familiar portrait in *To Be A Pilgrim*. 'Grey avoided us children in the house, but in that room, she accepted us as visitors' (p 31). The presence of Grey was always a sign of additional pleasure. An account of a yard cat, not substantially dissimilar to that of the feline family to which Grey belongs, occurs in the same novel. She was seen suckling two kittens and lay watching with the calm ferocity of some Pict or Jute encamped in a Roman villa (p 128).

The means by which Cary conveys the meaning of the trilogy are not of equal importance. The history of Sara Monday's life covers roughly a

period of about sixty years. It begins in 1880 and continues to about 1940. The first hint of the beginning of her career is there in *Herself Surprised*. "Indeed, even as long ago as the Diamond Jubilee I had a pick for my first place, as cook" (p 11). It will be seen presently that the reference to this particular point of time is not vital to the enjoyment of this novel. Sara is really the common factor in the triple pattern of the trilogy. She reaches out in relationship to the quiet homemaking husband, Mathew Monday; the decadent aristocratic lawyer, Thomas Wilcher; and the passionate artist, Gulley Jimson. Her account begins with the beginning of the trilogy in *Herself Surprised* and continues through *To Be A Pilgrim* to the end of *The Horse's Mouth*. Her character, covering a long period of time, gains significance not in terms of sequential time. What Thomas Mann calls imaginary or contentual time is a very good measure of her character. Time is something very close to the pith and particularity of our experience, without which it would become a dangerously abstract critical concept<sup>5</sup>. Sara dwelt on the unbelievable growth of her mind and maturity and confessed, "It was only seven, but I myself was surprised at the time; it had gone so fast, but I thought, if he makes it nine, then he has something to say upon that, so that I did not gainsay it" (p 166. *Herself Surprised*). 'The formal logic of the clock' is, then, not central to the scheme of Sara's world. Her character is informed by an attitude of sympathy. In the organisation of this character time stands still. Sara, for example, said that she was sorry for any bachelor like Wilcher who had to be at the mercy of his servants (p 166). Again, she argued that if she turned Wilcher out, he would be hurt. After all she was a man, and a delicate one at that (p 168). Cary runs close to the other end of over-emphasizing the importance of subjective time and happily ends by striking a right balance in the novel between time experienced subjectively and natural or objective time.

In *To Be A Pilgrim* there are references to time old and new; and especially there are constant evocations of the spirit of old time. Cary employs the technique concerning time as a sharper tool than others in order to evaluate the subject. Ann, a niece of Wilcher, was a stranger and he asks how a stranger can like an old man. 'They know nothing of them but what they see and imagine; which in an old man cannot be very pleasant or entertaining' (p 9). Here there is a suggestion that old time, like old men is rather undesirable. Again, Wilcher mentions how Lucy, the rebel, began in revolution against the new, for she did not think that all change was progress (p 24-25). There are also magnificent evocations of the

3. My suspicion that Ann and possibly Robert would not be sorry to see me out of the way. The truth that such a wish on their part would not be unnatural or incompatible with dutiful feelings, etc.

The balance sheet is continued till item No. 5. Debits and credits provide an accuracy of emotional involvement. In conclusion, Wilcher strikes the balance that he is not a good man and that he had lived a futile and foolish life (pp 90-91). Here there is an extra drama in appreciating the problem that Cary confronted and there is a pleasure in perceiving the device he has invented in order to overcome the problem. Wilcher's lump of experience is put to the test of technique and the balance sheet as a form enriches the world of action.

Another simple skill in contriving effect compels our attention. Recurrent references to India and Indian ways of life become for Cary an obsession. Sara Monday in *Herself Surprised* would like to travel someday and see India where, Mr. Hickson told her, a girl with money would always get something (p 54). A little later Wilcher speaks about Bobby Brown and tells the reader that his mother was dead and his father was married again in India (p 148). Again, "My own father", Wilcher said, "when he went to India as a Colonel of his regiment, would have no subaltern that did not go regularly to Communion, and he had prayer meetings for his men too....." (p 185). *To Be A Pilgrim* and *The Horse's Mouth* also abound in references to India. Thomas Wilcher in *To Be A Pilgrim* looked at the uncheerful face of his niece, Ann. It was so confident in its uncheerfulness that he might as well talk grace to a Chactaw Indian (p 11). On another occasion Bill and Edward, two relatively unimportant characters in the novel, were talking to each other and Amy, another girl was referred to as a daughter of old Sprott in the I. C. S. (p 107). Even in *The Horse's Mouth* Gulley Jimson refers to Plantie, the shoe-maker as one who thinks a lot of Buddha, Karma and Confucius (p 46).

Malcolm Foster, Joyce Cary's biographer, records that the novelist was interrupted in his writing of fictions and had to come over to India on an important assignment (pp 378-79) in 1946. The letters he wrote to friends and relatives in England at this time show the way his mind had been working. There are stray remarks in a letter which he wrote to John. "All Indians are nationalists—that is essential—but a pretty high proportion are fearful of the dark future.....But one has to approach Indian religion by oneself.....one doesn't get much help from Hindus" 7. It may be possible to reduce the references to India and Indian ways of life to a few broad categories,

classify them into divisions depending on his romantic attraction towards Indian life, his interest in Indian civil and military service and his desire to depict Indian philosophy and religion. Thus, one can formulate Cary's systems of ideas and beliefs from them fairly well. Many students of Joyce Cary are fascinated by the sustained appeal of what is often called truth contained in his oft-repeated references to Buddha, Karma, Nirvana, etc and try to explore them all on the basis of facts as information. Most contemporary students of literature would agree that a writer's ideas have as little to do with his artistic talent as his personal morals.....Not many people would agree with the views of man held by Homer. Dante, Baron Corvo, or Ezra Pound ; but whether or not we agree with them should have little to do with whether or not we accept or reject their art" <sup>8</sup>

Are these constitutive categories of references to India and Indian ways of life significant as elements of art or important as experiments in technique ? The difference between art and technique is the difference between Strategy and Tactics in military parlance ...Art would involve taste, temper, and proportion or the general plan in the background of the novelist's mind, whereas technique would be applied ingenuity<sup>9</sup>. I have deliberately chosen to cite these instances in order to illustrate how Cary's technique of writing fiction triumphs. Our memory of the trilogy is definitely greater than that of a single book or even a particular protagonist but within the broader framework of this work of imagination it is possible to find out new narrative devices. Cary's references to India are such subtleties of composition. The Cary characters talk of India in order to heighten a feeling of fascination for foreign lands. Thus Sara at one time had begun telling Mathew Monday that she would like to see India someday where a girl with money would always get something (p. 54. *Herself Surprised*). Again, Thomas Wilcher was out on a political campaign to local clubs, especially on India, wore Indian costumes and worked up the imagination of the audience. What references to America and American ways of life are to Charley Brown (in *Charley is my Darling*) and Evelyn Corner (in *A House of Children*), references to India and Indian ways of life are to Sara, Wilcher and Jimson. This edifice of multiple viewpoints confers a density and reality on the word of fiction and an awareness of the devices of his design enumerated earlier gives the readers an insight into how Cary has met the challenge and triumphed in transforming the raw experiences of life into trilogy.

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# NILIMA DEVI'S POETRY : AN APPRAISAL

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K. C. LAHIRI

There is a spontaneity and an inevitability about Nilima Devi's verse, though written in a foreign language.

She is spontaneous in the easy expression of her feelings and thoughts and in the perfect naturalness of her diction and imagery. She weaves a poem as a wreath of flowers, rather multi-coloured beads of sensuousness through which runs an invisible thread of thought.

Here are two lines taken casually :

"Better, indeed, for the soul to float in timeless, spaceless night  
Bathing in the peace of soft, silken, star-powdered dark."

(*This, Our Life* : pp 11-12)

The description of darkness is visual in 'star-powdered' : powder of stars, that is, fine particles or scintillations of light, are sprinkled over the expanse of darkness. But the sensation conveyed by 'bathing' is primarily that of touch, with an added suggestion of softness and smoothness of glossy 'silk'.

There is, again, interplay of vision and motion in

"I dance with the sunlight on the tree-tops ;  
And moonbeams on the sands of the seashore ;  
I soar high on the fleecy clouds in the illimitable blue".

(*Ibid* : pp. 29-31)

A full oriental atmosphere of deserted grandeur and undisturbed peace is evoked in

"I walk up the few low steps slowly  
Across the whole width of the wide verandah".  
"I pass the avenue of tall, old *neem* trees".

(*The Old Red House*)

The particular images in her poetry, however, do not waste their intensity in un-coordinated diffused brilliance. A fine but strong string of thought, a subtle meditative strain always binds them in organic cohesion. Through the scattered sense perceptions the individual feeling reassures the poet of her personal faith—the Upanisadic realisation that the Soul of man lives through all the life-processes of the Universe :

"I remain.

In every growing manifestation of life, I am :

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I sprout with the spring flowers ;  
I sing the spring-song of the world that is and to be".

(*Ibid* : pp. 25-28)

The same serene contemplation, the same cool conviction, behind speculations on the nature and destination of life persists in

"The Soul ? The Spirit ?  
Like a caged bird it beats its luminous wings  
Against the prison bars of the frame of clot and clay,  
Till one unexpected hour releases it from its bondage.  
Call you that Death ? But, surely not the end ;  
For there is no end to life." (*Four Winds*)

The poem, *Four Winds*, may, as a whole be set beside Shakespeare's seven Ages of Man, as much in generalisations as in details of pictures drawn. It has all the sublimity of a detached observer, without the satire of a cynical Jacques : it is rather mellowed all through with human longing and love.

But with all her spontaneous flow of feeling and thought ; matched with an equally easy outpouring of imagery and rhythm, Nilima Devi's verse sometimes curiously conveys an impression of cleverness, a conscious effort after effectiveness, particularly in the structure and lay-out of adjectives and in the spruce, though sparing, use of rhetorical tropes.

There comes a shock of contrary suggestions in "cool, purple twilight". 'Cool' harmonises perfectly with 'twilight' ; but against both clashes 'purple', symbolic of heat and passion.

A special charm comes from her careful choice and artful array of epithets, e. g.

'Trembling, twilight hour' (dusk or dawn delicately poised between light and darkness) ;

'Much trodden, unforgotten path' (the internal rhyme striking the image home) ;

'Rust-red, old red bricks' (the concrete 'rust' leading to the abstraction 'old', so naturally).

Impressive too is her power of compound-formation. The compounded adjectives are all so pregnant with suggestions, each telling a story of sense and feeling, of Intellection and imagination, e. g.

'Purple, star-spangled mantle (glittering stars sewn on the purple mantle of the sky) ;

'Gloom-wedded Doom' (Death married to darkness, sadness) ;

'Moon-washed flowers' (flowers bathed in, refreshed by soothing moon beams) ;

'Bridal-white flowers'(flowers with the freshness of the wedding feast) and many more simple ones, e. g.

'Moon-drenched path', 'Dew-wetdawn', 'Ink-dark sky', 'star-spattered sky', 'Heart-shaped lawn', 'Dream-laden eyes'.

To secure effect she also resorts to many a conventional use of rhetorical figures.

There are alliterations galore :

'Potent poppy-seed potion' ; 'rust-red. old red, bricks' ; 'shadow-silvered sylvan pool'.

In 'hour-old bride' is the figure Hypallage, the epithet 'hour-old' being transferred from 'lover' to 'bride' ? or, is it Synecdoche, concrete for abstract, 'bride' for love, 'bride' being born with the birth of love ?

And there are rich ; suggestive similes, as in

'Her unbraided curls brush my face

Like the fluttering wings of a frightened moth'.

(*The Lady of the Night*)

The moth flying into flame is the conventional image of self-immolation. In the fire of passion, 'unbraided' and 'fluttering' having an added semblance.

Daringly romantic, Nilima Devi's verse successfully combines loveliness with modernity. 'Her mood alternates between the joy of living and speculations about the unknown, between introspection and memories, between ennui and pulsating happiness'. She is traditional and modern at the same time. While in many respects she may be put in the class of earlier Bengali women poets writing in English, from other points of view her poetry picks up the strains of recent masculine versifiers.

In simplicity and forcefulness of description she approaches Sarojini Naidu, and in depth and intensity of experience she may be placed beside Toru Dutt in such Wordsworthian lines as these :

"breaking the silence come joyous peals of ringing laughter—The riotous rush of pattering childish feet, Bursts of music, merry sounds of frolic and feasting".

An echo of Manomohan Ghosh's Nature-cum-Love poetry may be heard in

"The whit moon's light caresses

The branches of a wax-white, flowering

Magnolia tree—the petal-tips of tube-roses ;

Then it kisses my love's fair face". (*When the Moon Died*)

But in expressing sheer weariness of life and sense of frustration she



is rather in tune with the characteristic temper of her brother-poets among the youngest generation :

Life is but a ruthless automaton  
To which perpetually slaves they are,  
Like cogs in its wheels, from birth till death,  
Rotating day unto night will-less, joyless, soul-less.  
Mechanical, they toll, sleep, wake, beget and die.  
Like a herd of dumb driven cattle they cross  
The rubicon twixt life and death. (*Crossing the Rubicon*)

The illustrative-decorative pictures sketched at the beginning and end of the poems are symbolic—simple and suggestive in their way. The aspiration of the Spirit of Man to escape from the bondage of flesh and fiction into the freedom of timeless, spaceless night is symbolised by the bird beating its luminous wings against the coloured cobweb of the cage.

And in *Post Mortem*, Death's black shapeless figure stands beside the dark, turgid torrent of Lethe. This illustration goes perfectly with the theme of the verse—a poet's vision of the evolution of Death from 'a gentler sister of life' to an image of fear and gloom. May be, men once felt Death's cool touch as a beneficent benediction. But when Death, in moods of wanton caprice, tore the new-born babe from its suckling mother's breast and snatched the young lover from his bride, Love cursed Death who, in His turn, waged remorseless war on mankind. And the fire of His hideous hate seared and burnt Him into a stark skeleton enveloped by the gloom of countless buried aeons.

## SOME ASPECTS OF THE LANGUAGE OF *SONS AND LOVERS*

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B. P. PADHI

The relation between the novel and the reader on the one hand, and between the different characters in the novel on the other, is essentially *rhythmic*. That is to say, the relationship is kept up by a kind of tension between the novel and the reader ; this tension is expressed in a particular kind of language-rhythm. Rhythm implies a pattern and a form, and the objectives of form are realized primarily through language. The novelist is a verbal artist like any poet, but he, more than the poet, enjoys the wide range of language that is offered him.

But engaging ourselves in the study of a process of language, we engage ourselves in, what Wittgenstein calls, "the forms of life." This *engagement* is the basis of the satisfaction that we derive from our reading of the novel and therefore it is also the basis of our *participation* in it. To extend our analysis a little further, language is ultimately related to a psychology of response. In this short paper I propose to point out some aspects of the language that Lawrence has used in *Sons and Lovers*. For the sake of convenience, I shall take up the chapter "Passion" in particular, for analysis.

### I

The language in which *Sons and Lovers* is cast, closely parallels the primary and original language of our minds. But Lawrence has also a private language of his own, in the sense that it is peculiar to the private sensations of his characters. He believed, or so it seems, in the kind of privacy that Wittgenstein has so much talked about and which says that it is virtually impossible on the part of one person to enter into the private sensations of another person. And the major conflict in the novel under discussion is the result of the inability on the part of the characters to understand the private language of one another. Thus Paul, his mother, Miriam and Clara get involved in a series of triangular conflicts. I should like to stress this quality of *Sons and Lovers*, one that at once conceals and reveals.

In this novel the apparently incommunicable private language of the characters tends to become public and the tension that ensues, lends a

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certain depth and ambiguity to the novel. We have a passage in the "Passion" chapter : 'He had touched her. His whole body was quivering with the sensation. There was already a sort of secret understanding between them.'<sup>1</sup> Here the novelist, by a suggestive use of language *creates* a scene and the emphasis is on "touch". But we are not told anything about how this understanding came : it is only "*a sort of secret understanding* (*italics mine*)."<sup>2</sup> Lawrence's intention is almost clear : he wants to put Paul and Clara beyond the limits of mere physicalism, at a level of mystery. The passage is important in another respect also : the "touch" is the basis of the passion which is the theme of the chapter. We become aware, along with Paul, of the fact that Clara is not really "cold", which Paul initially thought her to be, for both of them were "flaming" with blushes.<sup>3</sup>

Words in this novel are largely used to create sense-impressions—images or pictures—impressions which stir any or all of our senses at one and the same time. These sense-impressions are, however, predominantly visual. What we are given in the novel is a steady stream of sense-impressions. The book starts with something like this : there are the "bulging cottages" with their sex-associations ; the "donkeys that plodded wearily," with their suggestion of pain and exhaustion ; and the colliers and the donkeys "burrowing down like ants into the earth," suggesting the unconscious wish of the characters to remain always near the "earth." As man and artist, Lawrence felt driven to render his story with concreteness, vividness and immediacy. The scenes and incidents speak for themselves and in a language which is richer and more stirring than the language of intellectual discourse. The function of language in a novel like this is not merely referential as is the case with most other novels ; it has something to do with the creation of character and event in it. One may consider the scene where Paul, after a walk in his home garden, finally decides to give up Miriam. We are absorbed in the novel, linked with Paul, are affected as he is affected by the sights, smells and sounds which meet him. At such a scene "the expressive, the cognitive and the affective are inextricably mingled"<sup>4</sup>. Lawrence is recreating for us the original sense-impressions through the medium of language and it is basically a *sensory language*.

The first two pages of the novel give us more than a score of *pictures*. We first get a distant view of "Hill Row"—'a block of thatched, bulging cottages that stood by the brookside on Greenhill Lane (p. 7).' We are then drawn closer so that its details become visible. We are then *shown* the alder-trees, the coal-mines, the donkeys and the details of the miners' dwellings. The houses are 'substantial and very decent (p. 8).' We are

then shown the 'front gardens' and then the 'front windows', then 'the dwelling room, and the kitchen' and then the picture of Mrs Morel herself. This series of pictures provides the setting for the novel—the kind of thing that happens in a serious motion picture.

## II

Individuals in this novel have been selected on the basis of their power to make us see or hear, feel or smell. The hours "crawled"; Paul was "spinning" down the street; Clara "rocked" upon Paul; Paul's eyes are "hard as steel"; there is "the silvery-dark water and the green meadow-banks and elm-trees that were spangled with gold"; there are the oak-trees "in whose branches a twilight was tangled"; there is the silence which is "watery". We have also the passage that brilliantly describes a kiss: 'Her mouth was offered him and her throat; her eyes were half shut, her breast was tilted as if it *asked* for him... Her mouth was fused with his; their bodies were sealed and annealed. It was some minutes before they *withdrew*. They were standing beside the *public* path (p. 376, italics mine).' The novel way in which the limits of language have been crossed, to offer us a picture of what went on, leads us to accept the mystic experience emphasized by the words "sealed and annealed." They remind me of the lovers in Donne's *The Extasie*; they bring into my mind the pictures of intimate Gothic statues. "Withdrew" is a fine word to describe the final attitude of the lovers, after their up and down movements between their public and private selves. The final line of the passage is important in this context,

There is again the passage in the chapter "Passion": 'They went in *silence*. When they came to the *light*, he let go her hand. Neither spoke till they reached the station. Then they looked each other in the eyes (p. 370, italics mine). 'Senses are deliberately fused and confused in this novel, as in this passage, when Paul and Clara come out of *silence* to *light*, out of a partly invisible world to a world, visible and hostile. It is this *silence* that covers men and gives them a sense—almost a mysterious sense—of security; against this there is the revealing *light*. At this point the different senses are delicately involved: 'They looked each other *in* the eyes.' There is also the passage in which the development of relationship is made in and through language: 'They shuddered with cold; then he raced her down the road to the green turf bridge. She could run well. Her colour soon came, her throat was bare, her eyes shone. He loved her for being so luxuriously heavy, and yet so quick. Himself was light; she went with a beautiful rush. They grew warm, and walked hand in hand (p. 433).' From

the initial *cold*, Paul and Clara have travelled upto the warmth of the last line, the intermediate movement being given in such words like "raced", "run", "quick" and "rush". Linguistically the balance comes somewhere between the two phrases "luxuriously heavy" and "yet so quick." And then we read the first line of the following paragraph: 'A flush came into the sky, the wan moon, half-way down the west, sank into significance.' "Significance" is an important word here, *containing* the hope of the sun that is described at the end of the paragraph as coming out in a "golden glitter." Between the *flush* of the first line of the paragraph and the *golden* of the last, there is movement of colours, meticulously given, red/crimson/orange/dull gold. Similar passages are found elsewhere in the novel. There is the equally fine passage in the chapter "The Test on Miriam." 'She went to the fence and sat there, watching the gold clouds *fall* to pieces, and *go* in Immense rose-coloured *ruin* towards the darkness. Gold *flamed* to scarlet, like *pain* in its intense *brightness*. Then scarlet *sank* to rose, and *rose* to crimson, and quickly the *passion went out* of the sky.' ( p. 349. italics mine ) We note the rising and the falling of the colours suggesting the rise and fall of passion in Miriam. The sequence is : fall/go/ruin/flamed/pain/brightness/sank/rose/went out. Finally, the passion that is in the sky goes away, possibly taking away with it the passion that lingered on Miriam.

The transitions between images in fiction and the relationship between background details and events, are often explicable, as in dreams, not so much in terms of logic as in terms of sensed emotional connections. In the "Passion" chapter, we are told that Clara's beauty hurt Paul, it 'made him sorrowful. He looked at her with a little pain, and was afraid (p. 412).' Earlier, we were told, her 'beauty was a torture to him (p. 403)'. Then Clara kissed him after which Paul held her fast. Our intuitive comprehension of the basis of the fervent kisses that Clara laid on Paul's eyes, helps us to understand why he held her fast and why it was a 'moment intense almost to agony (p. 412).' The undefined nature of the "agony" suggests a gradual relaxation of their subjective personalities, until the two stood 'clasped rigid together, mouth to mouth, like a statue in one block (p. 413).' And when we are absorbed in the language of the novel this relaxation also occurs in us in a voluntary and natural manner. The verbal surface of the narrative affects us in an unconscious way ; it Influences our feeling and emotions. We cross the limits of *fiction*.

## III

Lawrence does not use language to describe something elaborately ; certain elements in the pictures offered or in the events described are deliberately left indistinct. That, of course, does not mean that he narrated the events with rigid "poetic selection." Lawrence perhaps knew that fuller elaboration would impede the smooth development of character and plot. Here is an example of what Lawrence says : 'The drama continued. He saw it all in the distance, going on somewhere ; he did not know where, but it seemed far away inside him. He saw Clara's white heavy arms, her throat, her moving bosom. That seemed to be himself. Then away somewhere the play went on ..(p. 403).' In so keeping the meaning of certain actions temporarily obscure (we may note the use of such words as "away" and "somewhere"), Lawrence stands closer to such novelists as James and Kafka and differs from novelists like Hardy and Dickens. He deliberately leaves aspects of a character indefinite and vague with the purpose of stimulating the imaginative activity of the reader.

At places the language itself suggests the conflict : 'His heart went hot, and he was angry with them for talking about the girl [Miriam]... Something in the speech itself stung him into a flame of hate against Miriam (p. 397).' The three words, "hot", "angry" and "flame", together give rise to the word "hate" later. We do not know the precise way in which these three words combine to create the feeling of hatred, but we know that they had their origin in the word "something." That is the word, indeterminate as it is in any context, which contains the conflict. The complex meaning of the word "something" comes to us in a very refreshing manner. "All communication," says Walter J. Ong, "takes place across barriers...It teases us to more vigorous attempts, sharper alertness, greater efforts at compassion or sympathy."<sup>4</sup> We discover the meaning of what is said not in a laborious groping for the precise meaning of the words, but in response to the way they are said ; they affect us into a sort of recognition. We do not lament for the missing words, but are qualitatively satisfied with what is there,

This deliberate vagueness of description is a quality by which, at times, Lawrence wants to convey something which is the very opposite of what is conveyed by the verbal structure. One may note the suggestion of a tremendous amount of agony in a word like "silence" : 'Paul looked at Clara. She was rosy ; her neck was warm with blushes. There was a moment of silence (p. 406).'

In the Preface to his book, *Language of Fiction*, Mr David Lodge

makes a statement which sums up in a line all the points I have been trying to make in my discussion : "The novelist's medium is language : whatever he does, *qua* novelist, he does in and through language."<sup>5</sup> But this leads us to an interesting question, whether it is the language which determines the meaning, or the meaning which determines the language ? In other words what is the place of *experience*, *plot* or *character* in a verbal arrangement that the novel is ? I would like to answer the question again with a quotation from Mr David Lodge's book :

Whenever we praise a novelist for his 'Idea' or 'story', or for more local manifestations of his gifts...we are summarizing the complex satisfaction we derived from these things in their fully articulate form...These terms are useful—indeed essential—but the closer we get to defining the unique identity and interest of *this* plot, of *that* character, the closer we are brought to a consideration of the language in which we encounter these things (*italics* Lodge's).<sup>6</sup>

Our experience of any novel is necessarily a response to the creative use of language ; what is important is the *creative* use of language. Our doubts or beliefs about a particular character or plot originates in our responses to language. It is in large measure because of the language that it employs, that *Sons and Lovers* possesses something of the quality of actual, lived experience.

#### NOTES

1. *Sons and Lovers* (Penguin Books, 1948), p 369. Throughout my paper I have used this edition. Quotations from the text hereafter, will not be mentioned in a separate footnote, but only the page numbers will be given.

2. Like most modern novels and poetry, this novel beautifully exploits the "phonological level of language" extensively. For a discussion of this please see Mr. David Lodge's *Language of Fiction* (London, 1966).

3. Lodge, *Language*, p. 65.

4. Walter J. Ong S. J., *The Barbarian Within and Other Fugitive Essays and Studies* (New York, 1962), quoted by Lodge, *Language*, p. 71.

5. Preface, p. lx.

6. pp. 77-78.

## OBITUARY

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### PROFESSOR MOHINI MOHAN BHATTACHARJEE

Dr. Mohini Mohan Bhattacharjee, M.A., LI.B., P.R.S., Ph.D , Gooroodas Professor and Head of the Department of English, University of Calcutta, from 1941 to 1955, died of cerebral haemorrhage on the 4th November last at the ripe old age of 83.

Hailing from a northern district of East Bengal, he was in his days a serious and brilliant student of English literature at the Presidency College. Being appointed a Lecturer in the Postgraduate Department of the University in the regime of Sir Asutosh Mookerjee, he did his P.R.S. and Ph.D. with researches of outstanding merit.

In 1936 Dr. Bhattacharjee visited important University centres in Britain as well as in Western and Southern Europe on a travelling Fellowship, and earned wide recognition in U. K. and U. S. A. for his original researches in English literature. Having attained celebrity throughout India as an eminent scholar and educationist, he was invited to deliver lectures on English poetry by the Banaras Hindu University in 1943 and by the Universities of Punjab, Kashmir and Delhi in 1952.

After his retirement from the University of Calcutta. Dr. Bhattacharjee joined the Jadavpur University and organised its English Department. Subsequently he became Professor and Head of the English Department at the universities, in succession, of Visva-Bharati and Bhagalpur and was for sometime Principal of the Vidya Bhavan at Santiniketan.

Prof. Bhattacharjee considerably expanded the scope of study at the Post-Graduate level by introducing, in 1949, an enlarged and modernized syllabus in English literature and language, which continued for 25 years.

He was the founder of the English Society in Calcutta, and as its President for several years, he diffused his zeal for English studies.

Among Dr. Bhattacharjee's notable contributions to critical studies in English literature are *Platonism in Spenser*, *Courtsey in Shakespeare*, and *Pictorial Poetry*, the first two being published by the University of Calcutta and the third by the Punjab University. The first volume received an appreciative mention in the Variorum Edition of that English poet. His numerous papers, including *Evolution of Hamlet's Personality*, *Feudal Manners in Shakespeare*, *Italy in Elizabethan Pamphlets*, *Pico-della Mirandola*, *Kipling, A. E.*, *Tagore*, *Theories of Love*, *The Modern Gentleman*, *Basic English and its Possibilities*, appeared in various learned journals.

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A condolence meeting of the teachers and students of the English Department of the University was held on the 5th November last to express their deep sense of sorrow at the demise of Professor Bhattacharjee, and classes were suspended for the day.

Generations of Prof. Bhattacharjee's students mourn his loss.

*K. Lahiri*

## MR. KUMUD BANDHU RAY

On May 28, 1973 passed away Mr. Kumud Bandhu Ray at the age of 80 and with him we lost one of the last representatives of those teachers at the Calcutta University who had made English Literature an inspiration for Indian students.

Mr. Ray was very different from those who consider financial gain as the only guideline in their service life. Simple and unassuming in his dress and manners, he had a single-minded love and devotion not merely to the subject he taught throughout his career as a teacher, but also to his Alma Mater. He joined the English Dept. of the Calcutta University in 1918 at the call of Sir Ashutosh just after he had passed his M. A. with a first class first and served the same institution for 35 years at a stretch till his retirement in 1953. And he was a teacher who had earned the greatest success in having the love and esteem of his students not merely for his scholarship, but also for his depth of affection for them. Indeed, it was difficult to ascertain as to who was greater—Mr. Ray the man, or Mr. Ray the teacher.

We had the opportunity of sitting at his feet at the University and enjoying the full flow of his talks in classes, his clear exposition of almost any writer in English Literature, his vast knowledge of the entire range of that great literature—especially of the Elizabethan and the Victorian ages, his immaculate inflexions and his delicate appreciation of poetry. And yet in his dress and spirit he was a thorough bred Bengalee, with a strong sense of patriotism and the softness of a Bengalee mother.

Mr. Ray had an uncompromising love for truth and honesty. He had ever been a man of strict principles and was never afraid to criticise men and things whenever they did not satisfy his austere conception of what is right. This often stood in the way of his worldly success in life. In his personal life he had many bereavements. The premature death of one of his brilliant sons caused a deep-rooted void in his heart.

And yet this undaunted soldier of life faced everything with a calmness that was simply exemplary.

Once, during my student career, I had an occasion of having some difference of opinion with Mr. Ray on one of the immortal characters of Shakespeare. Mr. Ray so passionately justified his own stand that I thought he must have been enraged against me. But, to my surprise, I found that this particular incident endeared me all the more to my great teacher. Such was the nobility of his soul, and the catholicity of mind which is often conspicuous by its absence from the present-day Intellectuals.

Mr. Ray believed in sincere work as a reward in itself. He had once advised the humble writer of this article not to hanker after speedy and spectacular success, but to go on with an all-absorbing devotion to studies and teaching. This was his own principle in life and he stuck to it till the end. Even in his retired life he kept himself immersed in his study of English Literature. But he was so fastidious in his taste, and he considered himself so humble, that his innumerable notes and appreciations on different facets of English Literature were never deemed fit for publication by himself.

In the death of Mr. Ray we have lost a kind and capable teacher and a man of perfect integrity.

May his soul rest in peace !

*Joges Chandra Bhattacharya*

## PROFESSOR PRAFULLA KUMAR GUHA

The death, at the age of eightythree, of Professor Prafulla Kumar Guha ( on the 3rd February, 1974) removes another of the great teachers and scholars of English literature and language associated with postgraduate studies in English in the University of Calcutta. In early life, Professor Guha was on the teaching staff of the Ananda Mohan College of Mymensingh (now in Bangladesh) ; he was presently persuaded by Sir Philip Hartog (the first Vice-Chancellor of the University of Dacca) and Professor C. L. Wrenn (the first Head of the department of English of that university) to join the Dacca University. There, he soon made a great name as a teacher whose lectures on most areas of English literature, particularly Elizabethan Tragedy and Shakespeare, aroused the literary sensibilities of scores of students. When he left Dacca in 1943, Professor Guha joined the Surendranath College (for-

merly named the Ripon College) as its Principal ; he also joined the postgraduate department of English of the Calcutta University as a part-time lecturer. Some years after, he joined the Jadavpur University as its first Professor in English ; after his retirement, the university conferred on him the designation of Professor Emeritus. Professor Guha's reputation travelled to all parts of India, and in 1958, he was elected the President of the Baroda session of the All-India Conference of English Teachers ; many of us still remember his ringing address delivered on that occasion. In later years, Professor Guha delivered lectures from various platforms ; among his best were a series of lectures on Shakespeare which were published by the Institute of Culture of the Ramakrishna Mission. This was his second major publication, the first having been *Tragic Relief*, published by the Oxford University Press, and (if my memory serves me faithfully) reviewed very favourably by C. H. Herford in the *Year's Work in English Studies*. About a week before his death was published *Shakespeare : Appreciations* (Jadavpur University).

Along with countless students of his who, like me, have been blessed by Professor Guha's affection, I mourn the death of one of the wisest scholars in our discipline, one whose scrupulously careful teaching methods have established an inspiring norm for younger teachers.

*Amalendu Bose*

SATYENDRA KUMAR DAS M.A. (Cal.), Ph.D. (Cal. et London)

Dr. S. K. Das who passed away at the age of seventynine in the first week of June, was a part-time Lecturer in Old and Middle English when in 1961 I joined the postgraduate department of English of the University of Calcutta. He had initially been a full-time lecturer in the department for many years ; his expert knowledge of Anglo-Saxon, Gothic and Philology was found to be indispensable for the department even after his superannuation, and he was persuaded to continue his service to the department as a part-time teacher. When some years later, he left even this part-time work for reasons of health. I had opportunities of meeting him and working together with him at various committees of the university, especially at Moderation Committees where his firm knowledge and lynx-eyed observation were unfailing sources of confidence to me in an intensely responsible work. It makes me melancholy to think that with the death of Suhas Chandra Ray and

Satyendra Kumar Das, the grand old team of Early English scholars of the University of Calcutta, a unique feature among South-East Asian Universities, has perhaps come to an end.

Decades ago, when I was a raw teen-aged undergraduate in Dacca University, I used to see a lean-bodied, bespectacled young man seated at a corner of the main reading hall, walling himself off from the rest of the world by high stacks of books, occasionally visited by the Professor of English, C. L. Wrenn; the scholarly reader was. I learnt, a Research Fellow named Satyendra Kumar Das, the first Researcher at work that I ever saw in flesh and blood. This Researcher earned the doctorate of the Calcutta University in no time. Shortly thereafter, he went to London on a carriage grant and a Ghosh travelling scholarship and joined the University College there for Ph.D. work under R. W. Chambers and A. H. Smith. On return to Calcutta with this second doctorate, Dr. Das joined the postgraduate department of English of the Calcutta University. His London work involved the preparation of a textually reliable edition of *Crist*, Parts I and II. The thesis he had worked on in India was on *Cynewulf and the Cynewulf Canon*. About this work, A. J. Wyatt of Cambridge University wrote: "It is a source of vexation to me that Dr. Das's thesis on Cynewulf is, I presume, utterly inaccessible ... I thought it by far the most valuable contribution I have ever seen, to the Cynewulf problem and I greatly regret that the world of scholarship has no access to it." On receipt of this letter, the Calcutta University published the work in book form in 1942.

Dr. Das was a modest, quiet person, unambitious of power and pelf. I happened to meet him some years ago when I visited Sodepur; I found him happily tending the flower-plants in the small garden of his house, enjoying the richly-merited peace of superannuation. A rare scholar judged by any yard-stick!

Amalendu Bose